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THE MASTER.

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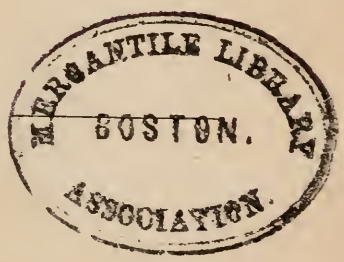
MRS. MARY A. DENISON.



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CONTENTS.

477.19

Chap.		Page
I.	The Music-Master	1
II.	The Master's Wife	12
III.	A Disagreement	20
IV.	The Minister's Widow	27
V.	Passing Away	39
VI.	The Music-Den	48
VII.	Madeline's new Home	61
VIII.	Marie's Opinion	72
IX.	Mother May	76
X.	The Angora	85
XI.	Roget	100
XII.	Charity	118
XIII.	A Visit	130
XIV.	Comfort	138
XV.	Paupers	147
XVI.	A Great Party	151
XVII.	A Likeness	168

XVIII. Minot and Lucille 177
XIX. In the Sick-Room 186
XX. The Letter 197
XXI. Sad News 211
XXII. The Quarrel 219
XXIII. At Midnight 224
XXIV. A Confession 229
XXV. Suspicion 246
XXVI. Vindication 252
XXVII. A Last Chapter 265

THE MASTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE MUSIC-MASTER.

THE sun was setting; but it threw a parting splendor over the high, bleached walls of the great music-room, one end of which was in shadow. Loporta, the music-master, stood opposite his favorite pupil, by the west window. He rapped the board before him with his violin-bow, and smiled, showing deep dimples.

"Well done, Minot! well done!" he cried, in a hearty voice; "you render that passage admirably."

"Thank you," returned the young musician; and his face flushed with pleasure. It was a beautiful face, its manly boldness softened by a wonderfully poetic glow, that, under the inspiration of the music before him, reflected the very light and color of genius. He listened with marked attention to the directions of the master, and threw back the heavy masses of dark hair,

that curled about his forehead, with a vigorous movement, as he lifted his violin again to its place.

Bending over the manuscript on the music-stand before him, Loporta poised his bow, and ran it lightly along a few marked notes, thus calling attention to some important passage. Thrusting himself unconsciously into the sunshine, that came in a last, broad, level ray through the window at his left, he seemed at once transformed, glorified. His white hair, curling in thick masses, glittered as if each separate thread were fibrous silver. His broad, bent shoulders shared and shone in the golden bath, and the eyes, lifted to the face of his pupil, beamed with an almost startling luminousness from under his flexible, irregular eyebrows.

A noble mind breathed in the features of the good musician (who already, at forty-seven, seemed old), and in enthusiasm for his art he was still a very boy. His ruddy cheeks, moustache of soft, curling hair, as snowy as his thick, white beard, his placid brow, his smile, which was a fascination, the twinkle in his eye, — all denoted a character full of fine touches and tender melody, not wanting in humor, and a nature susceptible to a fault.

"You play that aria as if you had composed it," said the master, after another trial, into

which the young man threw his soul. "Music is always badly executed unless the spirit of the author is transfused into the performer. You will soon be beyond me, Minot, beyond all of us; won't he, Roget?"

The man to whom he spoke stood somewhat back, in the shadow of a great organ, leaning against its side. He wore an aspect of gloomy meditation. His arms were folded, his brow lowering, his chin depressed so that it was almost lost in the high, thin coat-collar of sable camlet. He was very tall, — in fact, standing in the niche he did, he seemed almost gigantic. His eyes were splendid, and beyond his massive brow his features were indifferent; but the eyes and the brow would have redeemed the ugliness of a satyr. He half smiled as he replied, still hugging his coat-collar: "He is not doing badly, but has much to learn."

"That I have," responded the modest violinist. "I feel like a child, yet, trying to conquer the alphabet."

"You are beyond the alphabet," said the master, with emphasis. "You have *power*, Minot, — you make us *en rapport* with you, — you clothe the skeleton, here, with symmetrical outlines, — beauty and grace."

"And he blushes like a girl," interrupted a slight, boyish person, who sat at a small antique

table, not far off, busily copying manuscript music.

"That's a good sign," said the old master, looking at him approvingly. "When a man blushes, either at praise or censure, there's a great deal of hope for him. Come, Roget, come, George, quit your writing; come, Antony Marmot, — we'll have a little diversion. Here is an old quartette I picked up in my travels to-day"; — and he produced a yellow paper, so stained and blotched, that, if he had not taken the precaution to ink over the notes, they could hardly have been seen. The young man, George, took up the violin that was laying beside him, and from some gray corner came a shrivelled, stooping figure, with long elf-like locks, and thin arms, hugging an old, battered Cremona. His eyes, though bleared, seemed lighted with unearthly fires, and his fingers quivered to the tips as he drew his bow, evoking a wild, long strain of richest sound.

While they are grouped together, it will not be amiss to describe the room in which the old master spent the greater part of his time. It was an oblong apartment, twenty feet high from floor to ceiling. The floor was of oak, and had at some remote time been curiously painted; now only here and there grotesque fragments of color were dimly perceptible. At the east end

stood a great organ, its glittering pipes protected by a green silk curtain, much the worse for wear. This instrument had a history. It was built by Loporta's brother, and was his first finished performance. Being a man of an exquisite susceptibility, he was extremely sensitive. The work was a masterpiece, and remarkable for some improvements which added a finer quality to the tone. A rival organ-builder, envious of the sudden popularity of the new instrument, wrote a caustic article, disparaging to the inventor as a man and an artist. The latter read it, and fainted. On reviving, he requested to be led to his organ. He sat down, — and for an hour played like one inspired. The solemn grandeur of those harmonies, those who listened can never forget. At the close, he suddenly lifted his arms, threw them over the keys of the instrument, bowed his head upon them, and when, frightened at his silence, they lifted him, he was dead. Henceforth the organ was to the master as the spirit of his brother. He had it brought to his house, and never allowed any one to touch it but himself. Fabulous sums had been offered for it, but he refused them all. When in deep despondency, he would sit for hours before it, and the throbs and sobs of its mournful music filled the house. When unusually elated, its jubilant strains woke every lip to laughter,

every eye to joy. At the opposite end of the room was a small parlor-organ, very much worn and faded; between that and the window stood a variety of music-racks and stands, three or four gigantic bass-viols, and two long, coffin-shaped cases, in which were locked the master's treasures, one of which he called his "wonderful violin," the other his "soul of beauty," only to be brought out on great occasions. The windows were narrow and yellow-paned, draped with thick green moreen curtains, whose cumbrous folds were carelessly tucked up, thrown aside, or allowed to fall open and straggling, so that the failing sunshine might come in. Piles of music-books lay heaped promiscuously in corners, on shelves and tables. An immense desk, that the master appropriated to his own use exclusively, stood in the centre of the room. This was completely covered with blank papers, unfinished scores, sheets of music, blotters, erasers, pencils, pens, and inkstands. The space on either side of this was nearly filled by two pianos; one a little, old-fashioned English affair, of wondrous value in the master's eyes; the other a modern, solid, iron-framed instrument, with rosewood case, splendidly carved and polished. A few pictures hung in the spaces that were left for them; a round window, cut in the centre and at the top of the wall, admitted a dim white light, for it

was seldom disturbed ; a heavy oaken settee and some black, antique chairs finished the furniture of the apartment. At first sight, there was seeming confusion in the arrangements of this room, but the master's ready touch assured the observer that to him all things were in order, and could not be moved but to be displaced.

The rich light of the setting sun now trembled like a luminous shadow, hovering over the five figures surrounding the five ebony music-stands. The master, whose name was Lorenza Porta, had become familiarly known, through his great benevolence and childlike familiarity with his equals, as Lo Porta, and the two names were carelessly combined, till now he was known to the musical world as Loporta, the music-master. His was the central figure, and a nobler face and attitude could not well be imagined. As Goethe says of Schiller, "All in him was high and great ; his deportment, his gait, the mould of his limbs, his least motion, under the influence of inspiration, was dignified and grand." The melting softness of his eye, the silvery hair of so bright and fine a texture floating back from the broad temples, the fresh color of his face, the flitting smiles that wreathed his lips as the music took on a character of greater energy, made him a picture of serenest beauty. At his right, young Minot, who in face and genius might have passed for

his son, stood like a young god triumphant in his power, yet still in the dawn of its consciousness. Loporta looked like a man who might devote his gifts to the cause of humanity and liberty; Minot like one who would consecrate his to ambition, perhaps to unworthy pleasure. Even the cynical Roget seemed lifted out of his gloom, and grimly smiled his appreciation of a passage of more than usual beauty. The little withered man, a half-crazy musician, who lived upon the master's bounty, elbowed and grimaced, but played exceedingly well, while the stripling, who was merely a scholar, learning for so much per quarter, bowed like an automaton.

"Well done! well done!" cried Loporta, and stamped till the unfilled crevices of his coat-collar were white with dust. "Bravo! bravo! that's as good execution as they will get from the grand orchestra to-night, every whit."

Then, seeing that his comrades were annoyed at the particles that were filling their throats, he turned to the old musician. "Look here, my ghost," he said, cheerily; "you should not allow me to pay such a poor compliment as this. My room is under your care, and yet if a fly shakes its wings, it raises the dust."

"Ghosts should not be expected to do their work in as substantial a manner as living folks," answered the old musician, in a serious voice.

"But what they undertake to do should be done well, sir."

"That is true. I 'll attend to it to-morrow," replied the old man, going back to deposit his violin in his own nook.

"Does he get any better of his fancies?" queried Roget, as he prepared to go.

"No, worse; he has taken the fit to sit wrapped in a white sheet all his leisure time. He is incurable, I fear, and must ultimately come to the madhouse. Won't some of you, or all, stay to supper? My wife will be pleased. What! none; well, remember, then, to-morrow at five; by that time I shall have concerto number two arranged. Good night, Roget; good night, Minot; good night, all"; — and he bowed them out.

As he entered the studio again, a sudden gloom appeared to have fallen upon the interior. The sun had gone down while he stood talking with his friends, and one huge shadow covered everything. Going towards the great organ, he stopped for a moment, seemingly lost in meditation. Leaning his head forward, supporting it with the palm of one hand, his elbow against the ledge, he fixed his eyes on vacancy. A slight rustling was heard at the other end of the long room; it was old Marmot, picking up some stray music-leaves. Presently

he opened a door near the little organ, and disappeared. For some moments Loporta mused; then, rubbing his forehead vigorously, he moved from the organ, and took up his position next to his writing-desk.

"I don't know what to do about this matter," he soliloquized, "and yet the poor child must have a constant protector. She is growing up beautiful; fearfully like her mother in face, in character. Add to that the dangerous gift of song; her voice is like the finest notes of a bird. I cannot endure to see her where she is, — in fact, the expense must be spared. I am growing old, and laying up nothing. But I am very sure Marie does not like her. She manifests, sometimes, a strange aversion. If she would only love her, she might so mould the child's manners! She *is* rude, she is impulsive. Rude? no, it is rather the freedom of innocence. She cannot go into society unrecognized; as my ward, — even as my pupil, — it will be different. O, if Marie would only like her, I could manage all the rest! At all events, she *must* come here."

This he said with an unusual vehemence, striking his palm against the cover of the desk. "Yes, she must come here. I cannot rest unless she is under my roof. As to her history, that shall be a sealed book; and if my wife will but endure

her presence, I must take upon myself the forming of her character. She is young yet, only sixteen; but she begins to exhibit consciousness of beauty, and, alas! of vanity. Both must be checked, and, God helping me, I'll make her a noble woman yet. She has great affection for me, as her benefactor, great respect, and for her mother's sake I love the child dearly. Yet I must be cautious, treat her with indifference, if not with coldness. Poor Marie! I wish she could trust me more; because she does not, my hair has grown white before its time. But I'll not give way to repining. The claims upon me are too many for that. Thank God fervently for the sunshine of hard work! Marie says I slave myself. O no! but for divine labor I should have been like poor old Marmot, long ago."

At that moment, the clang of a bell sounded outside the studio door, — Loporta called the room his music den, — it was the summons to supper.

CHAPTER II.

THE MASTER'S WIFE.

THROUGH a long, narrow passage, the master went, emerging upon a broad, well-lighted hall. This was on the first story above the ground-floor. In an alcove stood a statue of Music, an old, time-stained marble, which Loporta had brought with him from Italy. Descending the stairs, the master opened a door to the left. It ushered him into a brilliant little room, all flower-tints and beauty. A table, well-arranged, stood in the centre, and at its head sat a lady, one hand on the silver tea-urn, as if impatient to dispense its fragrant contents. She glanced up; the face was handsome, but shadowed, as if by discontent or sorrow; her taste, in the little arrangements of dress, faultless. She wore her hair banded smoothly away from a full, clear forehead. Her eyes were passionate, dark, and very lustrous, her manner abstracted, as with weariness. A splendid portrait of her looked down, triumphant and with smiling eyes, from a large oval frame, above the mantel. It was taken in the midst of her early fame as a singer; since then she had lost her voice.

"Have you brought no one to tea, Loporta?" she asked, as he stood in the doorway.

"No one, my dear. I asked them all, but they declined."

"Who have been here?" was the next languid question.

"Only Roget, Minot, and one other, — all pupils."

"Ah! I hoped to see that young Mr. Minot. He is a genius, I believe."

"Decidedly."

"I am sorry."

"Why, my dear?"

"Because I have heard that he is young and handsome. Such men, if gifted as musicians, sooner or later go to ruin."

"O no, not of necessity, — not merely because his genius is of the first order. I shall fear for him only because he has been indifferently brought up. If he has no fixed principles, — and I fear he has always had pretty much his own way, — he is in danger. But I hope, my dear, you do not think that, because a musician succeeds in his profession, he must be a bad man. Upon me, for instance, music has had the best effects; it has preserved my virtue and kept my heart warm."

A shade of quick, angry feeling, and the ghost of a mocking smile, flitted over the fine face

of Madam Porta; but whatever emotions gave them rise, they were instantly repressed.

"And that Roget! it seems to me he is a constant visitor," continued Madam Porta, handing her husband another cup of tea. "Pray who is he? I understand that he is rich, — Roget what? That is not all his name."

"I 've heard, but I don't remember," replied Loporta. "It is a French name, and the man is, I suppose, a Frenchman, though really I should never suspect it. He *is* rich, very wealthy, — and, if I may judge, somewhat morose and cynical. He loves music, — *that* is his redeeming trait. If he had been poor, the world might have been the richer for him."

"He has an ugly face; I don't like him."

"Not ugly. An artist would never agree with you. His features are possibly not all good; but when he comes out of himself, when he kindles up in a moment of enthusiasm, I have seldom seen a more beautiful face."

"But *who* is he?"

"There I am in the dark. All I know is, that he seems respectable, goes very little in society, has not resided in the city long, having been a traveller all his life, flitting from country to country, and appears sometimes to me to have some secret sorrow, — some consuming grief or corroding care that eats at his heart-strings."

"Conscience stings him, perhaps," said Madam Porta, giving a quick, keen glance at her husband.

"Perhaps so," he made reply; but at the same time a flush suffused his face, and he gave some indications of embarrassment. It was but transient; before she spoke again, he was as serene as ever. And now there seemed for some little time a mutual coldness. Loporta sipped his tea in silence; Madam Porta leaned back, trifling with some bread-crumbs, and gazing now and then in the manly, still handsome face opposite. At last they arose from the table.

"Do you expect pupils to-night?" asked his wife, in her calm, even voice.

"Not till late,—two or three, for an hour or so, by nine o'clock."

"Then perhaps I may have the pleasure of your company for a little while."

He looked up, flushing again. "Dear Marie!" he said, with the impetuousness of passion, "you know how delighted I am to be with you!"

"It is only on a matter of business," murmured his wife, quietly releasing the hand he had caught in both his. His countenance lost instantaneously its glow of happiness,—the fire faded out of his eye. He merely nodded his head, as he murmured, "I shall be happy."

"We will go into the library, then, if you please."

The library was merely a deep, wide alcove, separated from the dining-room by heavy curtains of dark crimson. These Madam looped aside, and carefully wheeled the largest arm-chair up to the little centre-table, at the same time brightening the gas, which only glimmered here. Loporta seated himself. His face wore an abstracted, almost pained look, as if some long-sealed anguish had suddenly broken forth. Drawing another chair opposite, Madam Porta, with the utmost precision, took a small portfolio from her desk, and, opening it, produced a letter, which she slowly unfolded.

"You know, Loporta, that I have one sister," she said. "She married a very poor man, — a clergyman, consumptive and conscientious."

Loporta smiled.

"You may not see the connection between the two terms, as I do," she said, noticing the smile. "What I mean is, that his conscientiousness led him to preach about matters that most people think ministers should have nothing to do with; they certainly should not, if they want to be well supported. It led to an open rupture with his people; the matter had so sad an effect upon him, that it quickened the latent disease that an easy life might have hidden for

many years more. The consequence was, he was not able to take another charge, and it devolved upon his wife, my sister, to support the family. She, like myself, had a passion for music, and was a thoroughly cultivated musician. She obtained scholars, and Madeline, her only child, who was but ten years old at the commencement of her father's last illness, was left at home to care for him. Two years ago her husband died, and now she is herself dying. She has written to me." The woman's voice was shaken; she had put up her hand to hide the gathering tears.

"And did you not know all these facts before?"

"Not all. They lived so far off, and when she wrote me, her letters were tinged with her always hopeful nature. I knew when poor Clement died; you remember how I wanted to go to her, — but we are always so poor!" This latter exclamation was spoken a little impatiently.

"They are still in Virginia, I suppose?"

"Yes, if my poor sister is living. Madeline is seventeen; she has for two years been the sole stay and support of her widowed mother."

"And what do you propose, my dear?"

"This letter commends Madeline to my care."

"Ah!" exclaimed the master, with a little start.

"Shall I read it?"

"If you please, — if you please, certainly," replied Loporta, hurriedly.

"It is dated at Felixtown," said Madam Porta, "and is as follows: —

"'Dear Sister Marie, — I write with the veil of eternity lifting before my eyes. I am quite resigned, and very happy in the hope of immortality. Two years ago my Madeline was left fatherless; in a few days, perhaps hours, she will be motherless. She has been a loving and a dear child to me, — everything, next to God, since the death of my blessed husband. We have been poor, but Heaven has not allowed us to suffer for any needed thing. Madeline, at my death, will be homeless. She will miss me, I dare not think how much, for she has never been separated from me a day in her life. I have been her teacher in all things, — she my loving pupil. She can provide for herself. On that score I feel no uneasiness. It is the dread of her loneliness that appalls me: it is the only bitter drop in the cup of my death. We have talked it over, and I have felt as if I must appeal to you. Some time ago, I remember, you hinted that you would like a companion. My Maddy would be companion, friend, and daughter. I am sure you would love her; and she would be no burden to you, for she has capabilities that

she must use. Inaction would be misery to her, — she is never idle. Dearest sister, our affection, I feel, has not been weakened by absence; and you, in the affluence of your love, will not refuse to receive the dove that comes to you, wounded and for a time helpless. May God bless you! I cannot add more, I am so weak. The kind doctor, who has been our constant friend, encourages me to believe that I may linger till the close of the month, but my failing heart forbids the hope. I shall soon be where there are no death-beds. Good night, and, again, God bless you! Write me by return of post, if possible.' "

CHAPTER III.

A DISAGREEMENT.

The woman's voice had grown tremulous. The color faded out of her cheeks; her countenance was sad. When she looked up at her husband, her beautiful eyes swimming in tears, she had never seemed so lovely to him.

"And you want my advice."

"Yes, what shall I say to my sister?"

"That her daughter may come. She will be a help, and at the same time a companion, for" —he hesitated, colored, and added — "you."

"Thank you, Loporta," she answered, too much grieved to notice his evident embarrassment. "That was what I wished to see you for," she continued, half rising from her seat.

"I have also something to talk about, if you will give me your attention a few moments, Marie." The master did not look up, but toyed with a delicate little paper-folder that laid across the stand. "I am about also — that is, I — would like to take a new pupil."

"Certainly, Loporta, — I have nothing to say about these things; you have always managed your own business."

"True; but this one is to come into the family."

"Well, — we have taken pupils before in that way."

"It's that poor, wild little thing; you don't like her, I fear, Marie."

"What! that Lucille May?" The woman's face grew pale as death.

"Yes, dear," he answered, without raising his eyes.

Madam Porta shook like a leaf for one short moment, and drew her breath hard. "I don't want that girl here; I don't like her, — I never did," she said, striving to speak calmly. "Her rudeness shocks me; her vitality annoys me; one has to be all eyes and ears whenever she is round. I could not endure it, Loporta."

"The poor child has but few friends, Marie."

"In you she has a host, it seems," said his wife angrily.

He looked up; his gaze was stern and reproving, and her eye fell beneath it. "It is because I pity those whom God has written fatherless," he said gravely; "it is because I want to see no one go to ruin."

"I don't think it would take her long," replied Madam Porta.

"Perhaps not," the master responded, and a heavy shade of sadness crossed his face; "and

it is partly for the reason that she is impetuous and gifted, that I am willing to assume the responsibility. Depend upon it, there are depths in her character that have never been sounded. Taking her from a desire to aid her would subordinate your dislike to a kind of pity, and ultimately you might love her, or at least feel some affection."

His wife's face had settled out of its storm and tears into a cold, hard placidity.

"Who is this girl, who seems to be so dependent? What, pray, supports her? — for I notice she is always dressed well. She lives with people, I know, who used to be servants in your father's family. Why must she be raised into notice? Granting that she has genius, let her study for a professional singer, — that is all she is fit for."

"You were once a professional singer," said Loporta.

"Not merely that," was the quick reply.

"No; for you were always the noble woman that you are now, save that some strange impulse has dwarfed your judgment. And once, Marie, I did not have to supplicate for a favor. Will you never learn to trust me?" His mournful tone and manner evidently affected his wife deeply; but she schooled herself.

"Is it so great a favor?" she asked, her voice choked.

"It is a favor, — I do not say how great."

"Who is she? are her parents dead?" and she searched his face with inquisitorial eye.

"One of them is," he answered, with emotion.

"And the other?"

"I — I cannot tell with certainty," he faltered.

"And you knew the dead parent?"

"Yes, — Marie!" .

She felt that she was treading forbidden ground; but the very treachery of an enterprise sometimes allures; so, without heeding his stern, almost solemn manner, she pressed on.

"Was it the mother?"

"Marie!" he exclaimed again, his voice almost terrible.

"And did you — did you entertain a *very great* friendship for her?"

"Yes, I did, innocently, — God knows, not proudly," he answered, springing to his feet; then, turning upon her, with glittering eyes and swollen temple-veins, he said, in a smothered voice, "Marie, I command! I forbid another question!"

"And I, too, can forbid!" she exclaimed, holding down the fierce tones that, like tigers leashed, were ready to spring into passion, — "I forbid that girl's coming."

"She will come, nevertheless, Marie," said Loporta, calmly.

"I will not receive her."

"Very well; then write no welcome letter to your sister; for, if one cannot come, the other shall not."

"Loporta, do you compare this pure, noble niece of mine to that girl, or think —"

"Stop, Marie; I will not listen now. I have submitted to slights, and almost indignities, from your hands, because I love you, and nothing can make me forget that you are my wife, — my honored wife; but in this thing I am decided. Poor Lucille is every way as virtuous and noble-minded as your niece. Singular she may be, wayward and capricious, forward and hard to manage, but she is pure. She needs a protector; I have now an opportunity to give her that instruction which will enable her to protect herself. Take care that you do not put yourself under the ban of prophecy, 'Judge not, lest ye be judged.' There is something terrible in making a human soul responsible for our whims, our wayward fancies. Fearful consequences arise sometimes from hardening the heart. I warn you, Marie."

She sat moveless, apparently inflexible; but as he went slowly from the alcove, as she heard the door of the dining-room shut, she burst into tears, and for some moments sobbed unrestrainedly. At last she lifted her heavy head, wiped

the tears hurriedly from her eyes, as she half whispered, — "How can I be so hateful? When he is gone, I am all tenderness; when he is present, that frightful suspicion creeps, like an evil, subtle serpent, into my soul. Surely, why can I not trust him? But then there is a mystery, — and I hate mystery. I am his wife; he ought to have no secrets from me, and yet he will never let me approach the matter. How noble he looked! I am ashamed that I cannot conquer myself. Let the girl come. She is a poor dependent, possibly, upon some one who understands her history, — but why should Loporta take an interest so unusual in this girl? Who is she? The old doubts come back, — that aching torture of suspicion that feeds upon my very rest and keeps me wakeful. And her coming will make me such a spy, — I know it will, — O, I wish I had never heard!" — and again she buried her face in her hands. Presently a sound of ominous import startled her. The solemn wail of the great organ reverberated through the long passages, — stole ghost-like into her retreat, and she knew by that how terribly the soul of her husband had been shaken. For the master had ascended the stairs hurriedly, glided along the dark and narrow passage, and found Marmot alone in the "music den," sitting wrapped up in his white sheet, apparently oblivious of every-

thing. One candle burned dimly in an immense candlestick, and threw the most grotesque shadows over the floor, the ceiling, and the wall. Seeing his master mount the platform of the great organ, the crazy musician knew what was required of him, and, throwing by his strange apparel, he hurried to the bellows, and moved them laboriously. A weird kind of picture they made, — Loporta swaying to the mournful cadences, his glistening locks shining with a ghastly kind of radiance in the faint light, — the old man crouching, his eyes steadfastly bent upon the ceiling, as he, too, though with different emotions, followed the rhythm of the melody, — the white sheet straggling on the floor. The inky shadows, and the dusky forms created by the wild magic of the master, one could almost see shaping the atmosphere to life, — and floating, gliding, undulating to the intermingling harmony. And thus Loporta rolled off the gloom that had oppressed his soul.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MINISTER'S WIDOW.

WALK up this road with me. It is the time of shadows, of coolness. The wheel-ruts are heavy and ridgy; but at the side of the path, moss of the richest emerald, and short, well-cropped grass, afford a delightful carpet, starred richly with sweet blue wild-flowers. The shadows are soft and transparent, as if they fell like a veil of film on the rugged way. The trees almost meet over our heads, and a network of quivering light traces the ground beneath them, as the declining sun lets in a pale, shimmering flame through the tremulous limbs and leaves. Look between those two scarred trunks at the weather-stained, lichen-covered mill, not far off. There's a picture for you, to say nothing of the old cart standing near, its two low-necked mules humbly waiting for the meal those stalwart black fellows are bringing from the stout doorway. How cool and dripping the great beams are! and the sound of the water, it comes tripping, tinkling down, till here it is on the edge of the road, a white, shining, pleasant thing, seem-

ing as if it knew how much happiness it gives daily. Now we pass into this wooded lane, come out upon a by-road, bordered by zigzag fencing, upon a small picturesque churchyard, not neatly kept, for the nettles and the thistles are growing over precious dust, and many of the gravestones are prone upon the ground. Near this is the church edifice, by no means a beautiful building, for it is narrow, flat-roofed, and unpainted. The school is just out, — the select school, from which the little Virginia girls move merrily, some of them joined by their black servants, some followed by ebony imps, who grin from ear to ear as they get a pleasant word or a sharp rebuke from little missee or imperious little massa.

Some go through the open gate of the churchyard, some are provided with carriages, — those who come from a distance. The gray old church is alone ; the teacher is gone, — only one solitary figure, that of a young girl, comes quietly along, a shadow upon her pure brow, passes the meeting-house, and is lost to view behind the shrubbery near in the parsonage grounds.

The old parsonage of Felixtown was still the residence of the minister's widow and daughter. The place boasted a more modern structure, where the new and fashionable young clergyman who had succeeded the illy-used pastor, and who seldom alluded to the faults of his people, resid-

ed with his pretty wife. The quaint old parsonage was comfortable and picturesque; the new one, handsome and imposing. The old house stood lovingly embowered in trees of a century's growth, and had an overhanging, awkward roof, that sloped on one side almost to the ground, and which a wide-spread apple-tree was wont to use as a drum when the wind blew his shrill bugle-call; the new structure stood full and square to the road, and a few ornamental trees, that were born elsewhere, threw sickly shadows down the long walk. When the old minister died, — he was a young man, but they called him the old minister, — his little family were made welcome to stay at the parsonage, for which a very moderate rent was charged. This favor was accepted with gratitude, for the shadow of his life, who had died there, was dearer to those two hearts than the sunshine of any other. The low-ceiled, rambling rooms all bore the tokens of his presence. Here he had lounged on pleasant days, there he had tended the cheerful flowers, while the winter lay drearily without. In one nook was his library, — a mere closet, to be sure, and small store of books, but they had been his. In another room stood the huge old clock he loved, and where the musical strokes seemed to thrill to the fingers' ends when they sounded the hour that he died; and

in this wide chamber, that it takes so few steps to gain, he passed into the dim portals of eternity. I should not say dim, for to his prophetic soul they glistened with the glory of heaven. The cottage stood back from the road, and within sight and sound of a merry little waterfall. A pretty garden bloomed in front; — an orchard, its trees half decayed and stunted, yet grouped in with some noble fruit-bearers, spread out on the south side; — on the west, a succession of hills, each rising above the other, and crowned with an almost tropical profusion of foliage, lifted the thoughtful mind far beyond the contemplation of earth. In a pleasant room, looking upon this range of hills through a window from which the full muslin curtains were looped widely back, half reclined an invalid. The mark of the destroyer was visible in every thin feature, — in the lustrous eyes, whose circles were violet color, — in the wasted form, clothed yet gracefully in white garments, — in the meekness that stamped the whole aspect. Every few moments she turned a listening ear towards the door, then gazed forth again upon the now flushed and gorgeous west, against which the hills laid their burning foreheads, and above which the blue of the landscape was rapidly vanishing. Beneath the window an old bondwoman was singing, and the timorous, plaintive melody charged the air with

sweetness. Beyond this, all was quiet, save now and then the faint rattle of the wheels over the nearest roads. Peace was written on the brow of the dying woman, — peace had fallen like a hush upon the scenes without.

Presently her listening ear detected some trifling sound; she turned eagerly.

"Maddie, are you there, love?" she asked, in a soft, fluttering voice.

"It 's only me, madam," and a pleasant little yellow face, mapped with wrinkles, and enlivened by two sharp black eyes, looked in. "Is n't there something I can do for you, madam?"

"Nothing at present, I thank you; has Madeline come home?"

"Yes, madam, she was just laying her bonnet off as I come through the hall; she 'll be up in a minute, madam."

"Thank you," said the invalid, feebly, as she allowed her head to sink deeper into the pillow.

"She 's the best lady God ever put on this world, I knows that," muttered the little bondwoman, carefully lifting the mat outside the door-sill and replacing it. "And Miss Maddie is going to be just such a saint, I know she is; the Lord spare *her*."

At that moment a young girl, of slight but exquisite figure, came softly up the stairs. Her face was one of the few which even sceptics con-

fess must be lighted by something superior to mere natural goodness of heart, or excellence of character. There was nothing sparkling, or even joyous, about it, but a solemn splendor seemed glowing under the sweet features, and the very shadows of her face were soft, almost luminous. A certain spirituality of expression diffused itself over the gentle face, and almost seemed to glow on the soft, brown hair that in thick folds fell back from her temples, resting nearly upon her shoulders, so massive they were. Her dress, which was some shade of fawn-color, fitted her with that delicacy and ease attainable only through an artistic taste. Her hands were small and white, and her teeth as she smiled at the bondwoman's greeting were even and pearl-like.

"Your mother 's 'quiring after you, Miss Maddie."

"Is she?" and her step grew quicker, and her low, quiet "I 'm here, dear mother," sounded like music.

"Did you — did you bring any letter?" asked her mother, eagerly.

"Yes, one postmarked B——. Is it the one you expected?"

"The very one"; — and the emaciated hand was stretched out eagerly.

"Shall I read it for you, mother?" asked the young girl, pained to see the unsteadiness of the dear hand.

"No, love, — not till I have glanced it through"; and, sinking back again, she spread out the closely, finely written sheet. Her face lightened as she read. "It is from my sister Marie," she said, a moment after, looking up.

"Dear mother," murmured the girl, nestling up closer to the side of the invalid, — and her lip quivered.

"I have told you something about her, Maddie; she loves me very much, and I love her, though we are neither of us very demonstrative. She writes me a most affectionate letter; you shall read it."

Mastering her emotion, Madeline commenced the letter, and, with wonderful self-control, read it to the close. Then she turned her head, and, the letter still in her open hand, sank upon the pillow, weeping silently.

"Maddie, darling!" exclaimed her mother, laying one hand on the heavy hair, and leaning her white lips close to her cheek; "you know it *must* be."

"Yes, yes, it must, — I know it must!" exclaimed the girl, with almost bitter emphasis; "but we were doing so well, mother, — we were so happy together, and everybody seemed kind to us, — O, we were so happy! And now — and now —" Again sobs choked her voice.

"And now I am standing just on the verge of

heaven," whispered her mother, a sweet solemnity in her voice.

"I know it, mother; it is well for you. But I cannot go, too; I must be left in this cold, lonesome world motherless! O, forgive me! I am making you miserable."

"No, darling; I see too clearly the realities of heaven to be tortured with the miseries of earth. You too will have an experience, it may be deeper than mine, — it may be, in a worldly sense, happier; but you will bravely battle through the chances and changes, and stand with a smile where I stand now. It is but a little conflict, dear one, at the longest. Let it be sharp or brief, you will have a hand to guide you; you will rest on that hand. I do not leave you to the future unprotected. My faith in you is boundless. You read too closely the pages of your father's heavenly life, to forget how the soul must live in order to triumph, or to be led away by any stress of temptation from the paths in which he guided your feet. Trial and trouble only purify. Be your father's daughter there, darling, as you have been here; his blessing and mine shall rest upon your head."

"But must I go from here, mother, away among strangers? Must I leave blessed old Felixtown, the place of my birth, and go into that cold North city?"

"Yes, Maddie; it is my wish. You need a counsellor; you must have a protector. For the present, I give you into Marie's keeping; your destiny will shape itself as time rolls on. It may be you will decide to accept only her guardianship: in that case, I do not doubt but she will procure work for you."

As Madeline sat there thinking, she grew calmer. After all, there might be some appointed mission for her; and she felt a spark of heroism burn in the midst of the depths of her sorrow.

"Is Aunt Marie a singer, mother?"

"Not now, darling; she was once,—her voice was almost divine; but she lost it some five years ago."

"Did it make her unhappy?"

"For a time, I believe, she mourned incessantly. I am thankful you can never be a great singer, Maddie; the world's applause becomes so necessary to such."

"O, but it is a glorious gift!" murmured Madeline. "Do you know her husband, mamma?"

"I have never seen him; yet from Marie's letters, I judge he must be worthy of her. It was a love-match. She became his pupil twelve years ago; he was ten years her senior. She was married in the height of her fame, and to an artist. Such unions are often unfortunate; I judge hers

is not, though she does not speak with the enthusiasm of youth of her noble art-lover, as she often called him. You are fortunate, Maddie, in having such a home in prospect. You can at least prosecute your musical studies. While I have strength, let me advise you, dear; place my pillow a little higher, — there, that is right. There is no need of a sale; our friend Mrs. Lodi will take charge of the furniture, and keep it for you against your marriage."

The girl's cheeks burned redly for a moment.

"She has a nice little room, she says, in which she will store the books, and your father's papers and manuscripts; and she promises to oversee everything. If I should go suddenly, you will send for her, will you, darling?"

"Yes, mother," Madeline articulated with difficulty.

"And you must not put on mourning."

"O mother!" and Maddie lifted her head with a beseeching glance.

"No, dear, I forbid it; I would have you think of me in another way than that suggested by gloomy colors. Wear white as often as you please; — let that be your mourning garb, or rather let it be an emblem of my happiness and the purity of heaven. Think of me as being arrayed in the shining white of heaven, — not as mere dust, senseless and soulless in the tomb.

In the midst of music, of flowers, of every innocent enjoyment, keep my memory fresh, for there is music in heaven; immortal gardens bloom there, and its delights it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. In this way, my darling, you can in one sense keep me by you, and say to yourself many times, No, I am not motherless. As soon as the first heaviness of your grief wears away, you will love to feel that I am resting,—that I am basking in the sunshine of God's great love,—that I am patiently waiting for you."

"O mother! shall I ever be reconciled?" sobbed Madeline.

"In God's good time, in his own time, my darling, you will remember me without tears. But my strength is failing me, and I must say what I have to say quickly. One word about old Angy; I told her to-day that her free papers were made out."

"O mother! I am glad of that."

"She was very grateful. You would have thought so had you seen her fall on her knees, heard the prayer she offered up. I felt borne heavenward on its wings. She desires very much to go to the North with you. That being impossible, she insists upon it that you will come back, and she shall hire herself out, and wait for you. That is not impossible, you know, my love.

When I am laid away, go to Squire Usher; he has Angy's free papers, and a sum of fifty dollars for you. The money for my expenses, as you know, is in the house, in your father's secretary. Now I am weary; I long for sleep."

She fell back exhausted, after her daughter had shaken the pillow and smoothed it. Presently she opened her eyes, — those soft, dreamy orbs, which were reproduced in her daughter, — and looked once more from the cottage-window. The twilight had deepened rapidly; a hue of sober brown enveloped the base of the hill, and dun and black shadows encompassed its many hollows and depressions. A soft purple glow overspread the sky; the crickets were beginning to chirp, the fire-flies to emerge from their coverts, those Cinderellas of the insect world, who crouch all day by the ashes, as it were, but come out star-princes at night. "How beautiful!" she murmured; then, casting her glances skyward, "but up *there* how much more beautiful!"

"Are you in pain, mother?" whispered Madeline, her face growing paler as she watched the fading features before her.

"No, darling; a babe might sleep on its mother's breast with less ease than I feel now. He is going with me over the river."

In a few moments she motioned for Madeline to kiss her, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER V.

PASSING AWAY.

Madeline still sat by her mother, her heart beating wildly, for this looked too fearfully like the last sleep. Presently the slave-woman, Angy, came in with a candle, and placed it on a stand behind the sick woman's bed. Then she glided forward, and looked into the wan face, with its heavy lashes lying so still upon the cheek.

"She 's asleep, Miss Maddie?" she queried. Madeline nodded "Yes."

"Mars Harry down stairs," whispered the slave again. The girl's eye brightened; she was not all alone with her grief. "You go, an' I 'll stay here," continued the negress, preparing to seat herself. "When the missus wakes I 'll call you."

"Very well, Angy," and giving one long, loving look as she bent over the sleeping woman, Maddie turned to leave the chamber. She paused at the threshold, glanced back, came forward again, saying with a low, nervous laugh, "You 're sure she breathes, aunty?"

"Yes, chile, go 'long; I can *hear* her."

Still the young girl lingered, her eyes fastened on the face which had never looked so beautiful to her before. She felt a strange, half-unearthly attraction, that she could only conquer by force of will; so setting her face resolutely round, she went down to her lover. He stood in the little room at the foot of the stairs, the nook leading to the library. There was one window only there, a bay-window, curtained and deep-ledged. Before that he stood, looking out on the pretty plats of flowers, and the rows of potted plants. His arms were folded, — there was nothing boyish in his face, though he was not yet twenty. A look of calm self-reliance made him seem grave. The sunshine had died along the garden-walk, had faded out of the carpet, had flitted from the atmosphere; but still there was a good deal of light. Young Lodi turned as the slight figure entered. His dark eye sparkled vividly; he held out his arms, and for one brief second she rested within them. She so needed repose, friendship, at that sad moment.

"Your mother is no worse, I hope."

"None that I know of. I fear the worst, however, every time the sun goes down."

"Mother sent word that she should come to-night, and watch. My darling, how pale you look!"

A loud knock interrupted Maddie's answer.

She sprang away, blushing, as she said, "Angy is with mother, I must go myself. It proved to be a stranger, a tall man with magnificent eyes. He was obliged to stoop as he entered the door. Young Lodi, anticipating Maddie's embarrassment as he heard a voice he did not know, slipped easily into the room, and stood in the background.

"Mrs. Clement, — does she live here?" asked the stranger, his voice freighted with a slight foreign accent.

"She does," answered Madeline.

He bowed courteously, — gracefully.

"She is living still, then? This young lady must be her daughter."

Maddie assented. He bowed again, his glowing eyes seeming to read her very soul.

"Have you any message for Miss Clement?" asked young Lodi, coming forward.

The stranger started, — yet the motion was almost lost in the easy grace with which he recovered himself. "Pardon me, — I come from her aunt, in B. I am on a short visit to Virginia. Madam Porta requested me to undertake a small commission. It was to deliver into this lady's hands a package, which presently, as soon as I can get it from my cloak, I will do. Madam Porta sent her regrets that she was not able to come herself, — her love to her relative, — a sister, I believe, and — here is the package"; — he gave it to her with another bow.

Maddie looked very pretty, but embarrassed, as she stood there. The stranger had done his bidding, and now lifted his hat to go.

"I wish, sir, we could offer you the hospitality of our house, but we are at present so placed — "

"It would be impossible for me to accept," he said softly; "I wish you — and you, sir — a very good evening." Maddie and Lodi stood there till he had gone.

"I don't like that man," said the latter, impetuously; "who in the world is he?"

"I don't know any more than you do, Harry; he is probably a friend of my aunt."

"He gave me a chill, positively, and has filled my mind with the darkest forebodings. He reminds me of a Jesuit I saw once, — quiet, but inquisitorial; smooth, yet treacherous. I have heard but little of your aunt, — which aunt is it?"

"I have but one," said Madeline, looking at the little package, as her lover led her quietly out into the corner they had left, and seated himself on the window-ledge, drawing her beside him, — and she looked up anxiously in his face. "My mother has decided that I must go to her."

"What!" — the young man bent eagerly towards her, — "leave Felixtown, — go to that far city! What can you mean, Madeline? are you in earnest?"

"Quite," was her tearful reply.

"But I thought my mother was to have you; I know she anticipates so," he replied, taken aback, his color changing.

"I am sorry; but my mother is very positive that I must go. I must obey her; she has her reasons. Why should you care, after all? you will be gone, also."

"O, but Madeline, I do care, indeed I do,—I am sorry,—so sorry! If my college course was only finished, you should go from this sorrowful house to mine, my wife. In that cold, Northern city, so far away, exposed to the association of men such as he who has just gone! O Maddie, bear with my weakness, but I am jealous of your beauty; some one else will see and admire, perhaps love you,—the thought is intolerable,—it is, indeed."

He had not dreamed she would leave the sheltering care of his mother, who loved Madeline almost as dearly as her son. He dreaded the effect of gay life on her inexperienced heart,—he knew that these people were fashionable, worldly, gay, and, above all, professional musicians. How would these surroundings affect one of her poetic temperament, worshipping all things of beauty as she did, all sweet sounds, all bright scenes? Not that he feared she would forget, or cease to love him; but there was that

nameless feeling inspired by a termination so abrupt and foreign to the plans one has long cherished. It was this impression that led him to repeat, "I 'm so sorry you 're going!"

"And I should rather stay here, Harry, — of course I should. It is the sweetest spot on earth to me, the place of my birth, and where my dear father lies buried. But I cannot say no to her now, or thwart the plans she seems so bent upon; for she has written to my relatives, and I am expected. My aunt has taken a great deal of pains for me, and I must go, even if I soon return."

"Remember my mother's arms are open to welcome you back," said the young man.

"I wonder how I can talk so calmly about it," murmured Maddie, the tears coming again. "I believe it is because I have seen her lying there, shadowy and weak, for so long; it don't seem to me, after all, as if she must die, but that this dread apprehension of some coming sorrow will pass away, and we two dwell together yet for many years. And still I know that is impossible. O Harry, I shall be so lonely!"

"I know you will, darling! If only you could have gone with my mother!"

"Miss Maddie! Miss Maddie!" cried the slave-woman, in a loud, hoarse whisper, "come up here, quick."

"O, what is it?" and, pressing her hand on her heart, Madeline hurried out, a terrible paleness overspreading her features.

As she gained the top of the stairs, Angy caught her hand. "Don't be frightened, poor dear," she said, mournfully, — "she is happy now."

Maddie cast one glance at the rigid face, the fallen, helpless hands, the pallor on cheek and brow, the sharp outlines, and with one great shriek crying, "Harry, Harry, — mother is gone!" she fell lifeless to the floor.

It was long before she came out of that terrible swoon, — long before she could realize that nothing was left save that cold, pulseless form that she could scarcely call mother. But by degrees the overwhelming truth fell with its cruel force full upon her poor heart, almost crushing out the desire for life.

By the time the fair form had been arrayed for the burial, Madeline had grown calmer. They were in that room, — the friends who had come to perform the last sad offices, — but she sat by herself in her own little chamber, nursing her sad fancies, looking out impassively upon the vivid moonlight.

It was a dead and shrouded world to her, — darkened all its sunshine, darkened all its stars. She saw nowhere any light, life, or beauty.

Flowers still bloomed; trees still whispered together; rills yet ran, and sang their little songs of praise; birds still came to her window, and hopped cheerily about the garden-walks: but what were they all to her? The heart that had given hers the pulses of life was stilled forever. O, if she had but dreamed that she was talking to her, that precious twilight-hour, for the last time! Doubly sacred did her promise seem now; and when, the day after the funeral, she chanced upon the little sealed package her aunt had sent her, and found a liberal sum of money enclosed therein, she determined to devote it to placing a monument — a small shaft of pure white marble — over her mother's grave. It was dreary enough in the cottage now, but the poor girl would stay during all the dismal preparations, and until the furniture had been taken to the house of her kind friend. Then she wandered helplessly about the naked rooms, weeping as if her heart would break. Harry found her in a terrible state of agitation when he came to accompany her to his mother's home.

"It is so hard to give up all!" she sobbed, hiding her tearful eyes on his shoulder. "It is like a second death to tear myself away."

"Remember it is only for a time, my darling," he responded, kissing her; "and if I am successful, I promise you I will buy the old parson-

age, and it shall be yours." With that pleasant thought to cheer her poor heart, she went from the silent walls, and a month had nearly elapsed before she began her journey to B.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MUSIC-DEN.

THE music-den was open for an airing. Marmot had gone the grand rounds with his broom, and his duster attached to a pole twenty feet long, and now the windows were open, the great curtains swelling and trembling with the strong rush of air, while from an old guitar, laying across one of the music-stands, the invisible fingers of the breeze swept a strange, wild strain of untutored harmony. Marmot had carried his broom and long brush out in the hall, the latter folded over by a hinge in the centre. Now he brought in an immense duster, made evidently of sundry silk handkerchiefs past use, and began rubbing the furniture, keeping up a running commentary as he worked.

"These old chairs are pretty well worn out, but I suppose the master would n't think so if the rush was all gone, and nothing left but the frames. It 's well I 'm a ghost, and don't need very substantial things; as for me, a moonbeam would suffice for a chair any time, if I could find one. That 's careless of him, now, to get candle-

spots on the piano. He don't mind, though ; all he cares for is the organ and his wife. When a man comes to that, to care for nothing in the world but two things, he ain't good for much. I 'd rather be a ghost. There 's my music now," and he turned his half-crazed old head towards the window ; " yes, there 's music, played by no human hand. It 's the angels that do that, — hark ! O hark ! none of your symphonies can beat that. That 's the way genius gives birth, unseen, untouched. Beautiful ! beautiful ! " and he clasped his hands, listening with dilated eyeballs as the wind came sweeping in, giving a full vibration of all the chords, and that died away as if hushed by its own rapture. He did not see that some one had entered, or rather stood at the portal, listening to the spiritual sounds, and gazing half fearfully at him.

A wild and beautiful thing she seemed, her light, easy, sinuous figure swaying forward as she held to either side of the door, her gay, laughing eyes matching the dimpled mouth, a profusion of soft, short curls of auburn hair escaping from her bonnet, — a sunny picture, lighting up the gloom of the sombre old den.

" I want to know if you 're dangerous this morning ? " she queried, laughingly, as he started at the rustling of her garments.

" O, Miss Lou, it 's you, is it ? "

"Well, I guess it is. How breezy you are! Pray, shut some of the windows, for I'm coming in. I say, Marmot, where's Loporta? I can't find him, and I don't want to find his wife. I've come earlier than usual to take my lesson. Say, Marmot, does *she* ever come here?"

"Who? the madam?"

"Yes, Mrs. Porta, the stately, the magnificent, —gracious, somebody's coming!" and in she flew like a frightened bird, scattering the music out of her portfolio. It was only one of the servants passing by.

"There, there goes my music, flying! Do you know, Marmot, that I never can hold anything five minutes. This morning I volunteered to be captain of the coffee-pot, and I hadn't more than got the third cup filled when something fell. And, Marmot, don't you think, it was the coffee-pot. Gracious me! I came so near being scalded, and I did get *scolded*, which is about as bad. Why, really, how cheerful you look here!" and she threw a bright glance around. "To tell you the truth, I am always afraid of this old den."

"I've lived in it ten year, and never saw anything worse than myself."

"O, but you're a ghost, you know," said the girl, laughing.

"Yes, at times I am," he made serious reply; "but I never trouble any one."

"Of course you don't; but where is Loporta?" and she threw her bonnet and mantle on the master's music-desk.

"O, please, Miss Lucille, please don't; that 's his desk, and must n't get disordered."

"Why, what disorder is that? nothing 's changed, I 'm sure; besides, he won't say a word when he knows it 's *my* bonnet and shawl; I can do anything I please."

"You can do that with all of us," muttered the old man.

"Say, where *is* Loporta?" She ran her pretty fingers over the keys; they answered her touch, as if for very joy.

"Gone to fetch his niece," was the reply.

"To fetch his niece?" The girl twirled rapidly round. "What do you mean, Marmot?"

"I mean his wife's niece. She is coming here to stay."

"She is?" The sunny face grew thoughtful. "Why, what for? Who is she? How old? Strange!"

"She 's just lost her mother, — lost her father long ago, poor thing!"

"And she 's coming here to *stay?* O, what a grand time she 'll have!" And the girl drew a long breath.

"A grand time? I don't know about that. We 're none of us over happy in this house."

"Oh! but to be in the very midst of music, of inspiration, — to be surrounded with the shades of the great masters, — Mozart (my dear, divine, beautiful composer), Haydn, Beethoven, — and then to meet the choice spirits that congregate here — You need n't look at me so, Marmot! I suppose you think that I have been learning all this out of a book, but I have n't. I mean, I should really like to be here, in spite of the Madam. It is so dull at home! And Loporta gives such nice musical parties! I suppose this niece will enjoy them all. Heigh-ho! I wish I was his niece!"

By this time Marmot had put everything in place, arranged the curtains and chairs, and now stood near the gay-hearted girl, listening as she touched the keys.

"You are a musical genius," he said; "you improvise. Ah, what a pity!"

"Pray, why so?" she asked, with a look of quick surprise.

"I was once, and see what I have come to! I pity everybody who loves music passionately, — everybody who sings."

"Because you have n't succeeded, do you think no one will?" she asked, mockingly.

"Ah, there 's so much flattery, so great temptations! They follow you, — they praise you, — they fall at your feet, and worship you, — they — "

"O, that is delightful!" cried the little creature, stormily, springing from the music-seat, and clapping her hands. "If ever *I* could be, poor little I, — why, do you know, it would be my greatest happiness to be admired for my voice! Beauty? Pshaw! that 's nothing, — only skin-deep! But the prima donna, — the *great* prima donna, — only think, to be that! Why, do you know, in some places in Germany the students take the horses from the carriages of great singers, and drag them themselves through the street. There 's glory for you!"

"But when the voice is gone, all is gone."

"No, for you have earned an undying fame."

"Pshaw! you and Minot are both alike; there 's no reason in you."

Lucille's voice grew timid, — her cheeks flushed. "Is it that young man whom Loporta praises so much? He *is* a genius, — how I should like to see him!"

She had hardly spoken when there came a rap at the door, which Marmot had closed. It opened, and there stood — Minot, jauntily, his fine face all in a glow.

"All alone, Marmot? — O, I beg pardon!" and instantly his hat was in his hand at sight of the beautiful girl, whose eyes had sought the ground after the first eager glance.

"I 'll call again," he said, when Marmot told him the master was not in.

"So that is he," said Lucille, softly. "He looks like a genius. I wish —" she did not say what, but thumped the keys without mercy. "How grand and solemn that old organ is!" she cried, catching at a new subject in her desultory way. "Marmot, did *you* ever see anybody there?"

"Yes, his spirit sometimes; he died broken-hearted about it, you know. Some nights when you might think it thundered, I am sure it is the old organ."

"O Marmot! — how strange you talk. I would n't dare to be here after dark."

"It is to me as if the master sits there; only what power works the bellows I can't say, of course. The same that plays, I suppose, only one is visible and the other not." The old man's eyes began to roll, and he turned towards the organ in such a wild disorder that the volatile girl was frightened, and felt immensely relieved when, after a moment of suspense, the door opened again, and Loporta came in. At sight of his mild face and calm eye, the half-crazed man cowered and slunk away.

"Ah! little Lucille, are you here?" asked the master.

"Yes, and here I 've been waiting an hour."

"So long? But what made you come into the den? the room was open below; why did you not go there?"

"I—I would, sir, but I was afraid Madam Porta was there, perhaps."

"You and Madam Porta must be friends," he said, drawing off his gloves, and pulling his white hair into order.

"I 'm sure I am willing, sir," said the girl, more timidly.

"I dare say; and now, as we are here, why —if I can get an uninterrupted hour — you might as well take your lesson here."

She sat down demurely, and Loporta was the stern master. He watched her fingers; he called her to time; he stamped, though very mildly; he lifted her hand, when it would go wrong, and set her right; but in one passage she was inexorable.

"Why will you not play right here?" he asked, impatiently.

"Because I don't like it, it jars me," she replied, angry almost to tears.

"That is only imagination."

'But listen, sir, this is better harmony."

"You put yourself in competition with one of the best masters."

"I can't help it, sir; his inspiration was at fault in that passage."

"You little vixen!" said the master, laughing as he spoke, "do you criticise your superiors in this manner! What shall I do for you, then?"

"Let me have my way for this time." She looked up full in his face, pleadingly. He half turned away; a singular expression, almost spasmodic, crossed his features, and when he encountered her glance again, he was very pale.

"Let us talk about something else," he said, quietly drawing a chair, and seating himself. Then he leaned his elbow on the piano, his head on his hand. "How are your people at home?"

She looked at him curiously. "The same as usual, sir."

"You like them? they treat you kindly?"

"Yes, sir; I — like them," she said with some hesitation. "They do not care much for music, though. I don't think they have any sympathy."

"You would like to leave there, perhaps, if you could find a more congenial home."

"O, dear Mr. Porta, if I could only be in some places I know of, I should be too happy!" she cried, clasping her hands, her eyes sparkling.

"Very well, your benefactor, of whom I have spoken before, is about providing such a home for you."

"Is it possible?" she exclaimed, her little face flashing. "O, can it be possible? And where is that pleasant home to be?"

"Here, if it will content you."

No words can describe how beautiful she looked

upon this, — every feature radiated her intense joy. "O, my good friend! I did not think of that, nor dream of it. Here, where I have wanted to be all my life! But what shall I do to repay this kind, good benefactor, and you who have taken such an interest in me? What *shall* I do?"

His face grew grave, as with a gentle sorrow. "I will tell you, Lucille," he said, quietly, "what you must do. Try to subdue that rebellious will, that otherwise will work you much sorrow; learn to be teachable, docile, and humble; to give deference to those who are older than yourself. Pay attention to little things, which I fear you have neglected; do not heed flattery, and, above all, try to please my wife. She is a good, kind woman, and I do not doubt but you may win her to love you in time."

Lucille had grown very serious; her face was almost sad, but her heart was bubbling up with love and gratitude. She remembered how often when she was a little child she had thrown her arms around his neck and kissed him. If she only dared to do so now. But some way a distance had grown between them, as it were a gulf that could not be passed. She was no longer a child; he no longer seemed a father, though fully as dear.

"I will try and do everything right," she

murmured"; — and the mighty organ, the huge walls, the dingy paper, and still dingier curtains, took on a hue of glory as she looked timidly round. It was a great burden to lay upon her, but she honestly accepted it, then and there, while all kinds of golden visions floated through her brain.

"She is a perfect child yet," thought Loporta to himself; "so much the better."

"When am I to come here?" asked Lucille, her face agitated with blushes and dimples.

"As soon as you will, when you have prepared yourself. You will still have the small allowance which you have received monthly, and which I am glad to see you use in a careful manner. To-day my wife's niece has arrived from Virginia. She seems a sweet and sensible girl, and has consented to take charge of your education in other branches besides music. Though only a little more than two years older than you are, she has had very superior advantages, and is naturally a teacher. I hope you will love each other."

"O, I shall love her, I am sure!" exclaimed Lucille, — "anybody who loves you," she said, impetuously.

Loporta started, as he gravely replied, "You must love her for herself, — she cannot love me much, a stranger till to-day."

The words and manner chilled the young girl to the heart. She blushed, angry with herself that she had spoken so thoughtlessly. She had felt as a child, but how would he know? That she would never do it again, however, she inwardly resolved; she would be as dignified and proper as a woman of forty. He saw that she was changed, and it grieved him, but he had marked out his conduct; and however unnatural it might make him seem, he would abide by it. "Send me word whenever you are ready," he said, smiling pleasantly, as she arose.

"I thank you," she answered, trying to answer the smile, but the attempt was a poor one.

"I may hear you play upon the great organ sometimes, I suppose," she said.

"Yes, if ever I get outrageous, and want a safety-valve for the letting off of my anger; so look out!"

She laughed a little light laugh, like her olden self; glanced timidly up in the nobly handsome face, smiling so benignantly upon her, — and felt reassured again, though not with her olden, childish confidence. There are some natures that a word, a look impresses. Let them promise themselves ever so firmly, make a thousand and one iron resolves, — become imaginary martyrs, and walk boldly to the stake, mortify themselves, and choke grief and sorrow down

with an overwhelming determination, — a glance from the eye they love, a gentle word from the lips that have been unkind, a pressure of the hand that has even touched them in anger, and all is forgotten. Back they go to the old allegiance, trusting as ever, lifting the crown of roses again, though they know its thorns will pierce their temples, — taking up the old burdens that will surely bow them to the earth, — ready again to suffer and forgive. Of such was Lucille.

CHAPTER VII.

MADELINE'S NEW HOME.

THERE is only one true source of happiness, and that is — God. Is it unfashionable, is it sentimental, to bring that name into a story such as mine? If I wish to stamp these pages with power, who is so powerful; with beauty, what so beautiful, as the Author and the Finisher of all things good and beautiful? He gives soul to harmony. His is the grand music of the forests, the oceans, the heavens, eternity. Men and angels sing before him. He touches earth but to make it bud and blossom, and laugh in fruits and flowers. He sends his angels to sing in the infant ear of a Beethoven, and forthwith the world is rich with his undying song. He groups men, as a skilful artist groups flowers, giving to each the tints and perfume of different gifts, yet harmonizing all. He is the wondrous alchemist who brings from all sources of suffering, crime, deformity, the purest essences of life. Why, then, should not he be spoken of, and his dealings with the human heart? "What have I to do with God?" asks the unbeliever. Only this, that you

can do nothing without him. Even in that wild wail of anguish that seems forever smiting heaven, — that cry from the helpless and deserted who live in endless drudgery, and feel only cold damps and hungry gnawings, and where there seems only discord, hopelessness, despair, — these, hereafter, in the great Master's oratorio, will be found, perhaps, to be the most triumphant hallelujahs. As garments may be washed white in blood, so out of the heart's agonies may be wrought the grandest anthems.

Some such thoughts as these passed vaguely through the mind of Madeline, as she sat reading her mother's little Bible. The first sharpness of her bereavement was gone. She could think calmly of the dear face so hidden in the black earth, — calmly of her own sorrow, — of her new and strange situation. She felt, in the very depths of her wounded spirit, that none but God could comfort her; and amid strangers she had him, — the God of her father, the God of her mother, — the God and keeper even of their precious dust, hidden though it was from mortal sight. She had come determined to do her duty bravely, — to be pleased with everybody. Her heart had warmed towards the likeness of her mother in the Aunt Marie who welcomed her with affectionate cordiality, but it had fairly leaped towards the sweet, calm face of the master, with his rare

smile and beautiful crown of silver hair. They had been very kindly silent as they drove home, knowing that her emotions must be too deep for words; and now she was left alone in what was henceforth to be her own room. It was a soft, warm, hazy day in autumn; the horizon looked very far off, and gleamed and shimmered in the white heat. Everything seemed remote in the long distance; the church-spire, just seen, looked like a silvery vapor, and the glimpse of the harbor was like a vanishing dream, so far away it seemed. Nevertheless, it was a pleasant day, — and a pleasant thing, as far as bodily comfort was concerned, to sit there in the low, luxurious cushioned seat, and scarcely think. Madeline, as she laid aside the book from which she had been reading, felt a calm, interior happiness, that only communion with the Word of God can give. She was fully in sympathy with its divine teachings, for the spirit of her mother seemed to impress her as she read, or rather she loved to imagine so. The book had never seemed so truly her own, with all its precious promises, as it did now it was her all. Madeline had scarcely taken time to look around upon her new abode; now she did so. Tears came to her eyes as she marked how everything had been arranged for her comfort; and there were not wanting luxuries. This chamber was furnished

more handsomely than the parlor of the old parsonage, and yet her heart swelled with a strange yearning as she thought of the dear, homely rooms. Outside, here, were no grand hills, with brown hollows and ever-flitting, richly-hued shadows, — no gates where children let down the bars, or sat astride them, swinging broken straw hats, and shouting in their mirth, — no gray old orchard, with here and there the star-like branches of the loaded apple-tree, — no fences in the distance, surrounding the barns and poultry-yards, — no cornfield, — no scarred and lichen-covered mill, swinging its old arms about with an impudence as reckless as that of the moss-hanging wheel that threw its bright showers in anybody's face that came near enough. O no! it was very far unlike home, — her good old Virginia home. "A dreary wilderness of brick," — she had often seen these words, but never realized their significance till now. She longed to see that range of hills "throwing down great islands of shade and gladness along the whole side." They were the last thing her mother's dying eyes had rested on. To her they were henceforth sacred. And now for the planning out of what her life must be! Not idle, — no, she should die without some work for fingers and brain.

"I wonder what sort of a young girl that is my uncle spoke of?" she soliloquized. "She

must be very talented, and very pretty, — or some way I have that impression. And I am to be her teacher; I hope she is lovable. Uncle spoke of her, — aunt said nothing, but her face seemed to change instantly, to grow hard and cold. I can hear the piano-forte; I suppose it is in use pretty much all the time. I wonder if I shall have the chance to practise for myself. I must not neglect my music. I suppose Uncle Porta must be rich," she mused on, still gazing about her, "his house is so beautiful, and Aunt Marie dresses with such elegance! How devoted he is to her, and what a beautiful face she has! In public she must have looked regal; what a pity that she has lost her voice!"

From these reveries she was aroused by the dinner-bell. Madam Porta had sent a servant up to guide her to the dining-room. Only her aunt and uncle were present, and both seemed to vie with each other in kind offices for the orphan girl. All was delightful at this handsome, well-furnished table but the stateliness and formality so painfully visible in her aunt. Why did she address her husband as Mr. Porta, and he her as Madam? The genial "my dear," or "my love," as it came from lips she had loved, were they never used here? Had the cold forms of fashion annihilated these gentle courtesies? Would she come down and sit with her in the afternoon,

her aunt asked her. She assented, aware that she must throw off this feeling of restraint, grow nearer to the hearts that held so much of her happiness in their keeping. The cheerful room, with its great bay-window, looked pleasantly inviting as she timidly entered it. Her heart leaped up at the sight of the thrifty and beautiful plants that nearly filled the great window, in their midst a little fountain, that threw cool sprays, and made a delicious tinkling music. Madam Porta smiled at her look of delight. She was sitting in a great purple-velvet arm-chair, a bit of lace-work hanging from between her delicately-shaped fingers. She had dressed her hair with curls, and looked younger and more cheerful than in the former part of the day. Her attire was faultless, though simple and plain. In her tastes she was as artistic as her niece, who, in her robe of a pale violet tinge, her small, shining collar, and little ruffles at the wrist, looked the impersonation of rest and coolness.

"You love flowers," said Madam Porta.

"O, dearly!" answered Madeline, quickly, fondling a fuchsia as she spoke. "It was mother's comfort to the last" (her voice was slightly unsteady now) "to tend and love them. What clear colors! how vital they seem, throbbing with the blood of *their* life! and what a strange

life they have, these flowers! What a pity they can't know how beautiful they are, and what comfort they give!"

Madam Porta looked at her keenly, as she knelt there, for she had fallen upon her knees as if in unconscious worship, her sweet, pure face upturned, her eyes eager to catch every changing tint, every shifting beauty.

"How well God knew our wants!" whispered Madeline, half to herself. "These flowers are good for nothing only to quicken our sense of pleasure."

"She is the true child of a parson," thought Madam Porta, smiling at Madeline's rapt expression, and the religious turn of her thoughts. "And you take such care of them," continued the girl, still kneeling, — "they must seem like children."

A painful chord was touched. The cheeks of her aunt flushed, then paled again. "I am very fond of flowers," she said in a lower voice; "ever since I gave up music, I have devoted myself to them, — and to Indiana," she added, laughing lightly. Madeline looked up quickly. Her aunt smiled again. "You have never seen Indiana, — I only show her to my most intimate friends. She is a dear, intelligent creature, but allows no one to pet her but myself, not even Mr. Porta."

Madeline's eyes had grown a shade darker with

wonder. Madam Porta laughed, quietly, left her seat, and went into another room. Presently she came back with a large crimson cushion in her arms, whereon sat, in all the dignity of her race, a dazzlingly beautiful white cat. Her black, velvety eyes, pink nostrils and lips, the rich, curling hair, the almost human expression with which she regarded Maddie, startled her into a burst of genuine, girlish enthusiasm.

"O, what a beautiful, beautiful creature!" she exclaimed,—"won't she come to me? I never saw such splendid white fur!"

"You'd hardly like her so well, if you had a taste of her claws," said her aunt, laughing. "She's a full-blooded Angora, and was given to me two years ago, by a sea-captain who died in this house. He had partly tamed her, but she took such a fancy to me, that, instead of sending it to some museum or other, as he intended, he gave it to me. My pet, my darling!" and she sat down with the cat (which continued to keep her lustrous eyes on the face of the young girl) still on its cushion, in her lap. Madeline seated herself by the flowers. The window partly commanded a view of the street-door. At this entrance there were frequent callers; she asked her aunt if they were all pupils.

"Most of them," was the reply. "Porta is practising, however, for the new opera which is

to open next month. He is in the orchestra, and most of the people you see are either players or operatic singers."

Operatic singers! this was indeed a new life, — to be in the midst of what she had only vaguely heard of, and that coupled with warnings and anathemas; for her father had looked on the dark side of all amusements, and resolutely frowned them down. If, indeed, these were contaminating influences, how must she strive to keep herself pure! Heretofore she had walked only in shaded paths and rested in quiet nooks. Loving hands had led her and shielded her. Now, when the witchery of a new life was gathering around her, should she resist temptation, and keep clean the heart that had known so little of evil? Humbly she looked up to the Fountain of all wisdom, knowing that there was One able to hold her spotless in the very midst of the fire. In her religious life Madeline was an enthusiast: she saw the presence of God sometimes as distinctly as Moses saw the burning bush; and her heart drank in now its contentment.

"Come, tell me something about Virginia," said Madam Porta, when the cat had ceased purring, closed its great, palpitating eyes, and composed itself in an attitude of grace on its velvet pillow.

"It is my dear birthplace," said Madeline, speaking softly, tenderly, — "I don't know that I can say much more."

"I have always thought Virginia must be a paradise," said Madam Porta.

"It is, it always was, to me; I think the smoke of a city blurs the sky; it is not as blue and bright as ours at home."

"Still, it is dreadful to think of slavery. How did your mother feel with her Northern prejudices to be a slaveholder?"

"My father owned three slaves," said Madeline, with dignity; "but my father set two of them free at his death, and when my mother died, old Angy had her liberty." Her lip quivered as she ceased speaking.

"You liked old Angy, I suppose."

"I loved her; she was my nurse, and a dear, affectionate creature."

"And you let her go! how could you?"

"She wanted her freedom, — she deserved it. I never saw such a happy creature in my life as she was when she knew she was going to be free. 'There 's nothing like it, Miss Maddie, it 's next to being in heaven,' she used to say. I always wanted her to be free, but she preferred herself to wait."

"I think it must have been hard for her to part with you, so long dependent."

"Not dependent, for she earned a great deal, hiring out. We never took all her wages, though, as some of them do; we always gave her part. Indeed, it was very hard for both of us, to separate. I thought the poor creature would have wept her eyes out."

"Why did you not bring her along? I should have been glad of her."

"O, you would?"

"Yes indeed, and given her good wages. I should have been *very* glad of such a servant."

"And she, too, would have been glad, delighted."

"Then, if it is possible, I 'll have her; what can she do?"

"O, everything! — and she is unhappy without work; then she is so teachable, so docile, and the most pious creature you ever saw."

"That is an item I shall not be critical about," said her aunt dryly.

Madeline blushed. She had always lived among religious people, with whom she was accustomed to talk freely upon such subjects. So she was silent.

A rich strain of music broke the quiet. Madam Porta opened the door and listened. A smile broke over her face; a flush mounted her cheeks as she murmured, in a hushed voice, —

"*Vanne si! mi hascia indeque!*"

CHAPTER VIII.

MARIE'S OPINION.

STILL, as she listened, she sighed over the memory of past triumphs.

"It is from Norma," she said, "and I imagine young Minot is singing. An extraordinary genius, that," she whispered. And then they sat silent till the air was concluded, and died in silence along the passages.

"Do you often have such music?" asked Madeline.

Madam Porta smiled as she answered, "Scarcely a day passes without it. My husband has some very fine voices under his instruction; but his prime favorite, I expect, is this young Minot, who really seems capable of everything."

"And this young lady who is to come here, does she sing too?" asked Madeline.

The handsome face of her aunt darkened a little. She let her hand fall on the Angora Sultana with such sudden force, that the creature snapped at it, but ended with a purr and a velvety kiss.

"She sings," was the brief answer. "Mr.

Porta did well to bespeak your good graces, she forfeited mine long ago."

"What! is she unworthy?" asked Madeline, alarmed.

"O no! only as such people go. She was a foundling, I believe, whom *somebody* picked up and cherished," she said, with a strong emphasis on the somebody.

"And she has no parents, then?"

"I suppose not,—at least I know she has no mother. Where the father is, I do not know."

"Poor child!" escaped unconsciously from Madeline's lips. "Pardon me, aunt, but I do so pity one who is motherless."

"I have nothing to pardon. I hope you will like her; she has a pretty face, if that will give her any favor, and is to be proclaimed, I believe, a very wonderful genius. She is only sixteen, but intolerably forward. I was averse to having her, but Mr. Porta insisted, and of course I have nothing to say."

There was a strange bitterness in all this; Madeline felt it, watching the restless eye and the crimson cheek.

"Perhaps Uncle Porta pities her," she said.

"He may go on pitying, then, to his heart's content; I shall *hate* her." As she said this, she looked up with momentary alarm, and tried to

laugh off the effect of her words. "Not quite so bad as that, perhaps," she added; "but I am unfortunately constituted. There are some persons I never can like, and can give no reason. She is one. But our singer is going; you may catch sight of him without being seen."

Madeline looked from the window, screened by the plants. Mr. Minot was walking by, in company with a friend. Madeline started, as she said, "I have seen that taller man before."

"Yes, that is Roget, somebody who called upon you in Virginia, — a singular man, morose and cynical among men, but a very Apollo when in the society of ladies. Loporta says he is rigidly strict, a very anchorite, yet as rich as Crœsus. He has taken an immense fancy to young Minot, who is poor, and is educating him. I believe he is endeavoring to shape his morals even. It is difficult to guide one so handsome, accomplished, and at the same time self-willed and fond of pleasure. I have known many such, and have seen them go down, too. I have little faith in musicians."

Madeline's eyes travelled to the portrait of Loporta, with its nobly chiselled brow, and fair, pure face.

"I know of what you are thinking," said Madam Porta, impulsively. "Yes, he is a master among men, — as great as he looks," —

and then came the swift shadow, the movement of uneasiness that Madeline had noticed before.

"My uncle is very handsome," murmured the young girl.

"Yes, even with his white hair," Madam Porta responded. Indiana gave symptoms of uneasiness. "What, my pet! you are through with your siesta, and want something to eat! You shall be attended to, my beauty."

She left the room, — left Madeline to a sudden rush of homesickness, mitigated somewhat by the thought that she should soon see her faithful old nurse again.

CHAPTER IX.

MOTHER MAY.

What is it the sun sees in those lowly homes, that makes it shine more gleefully there on the bare floor than it does on the thick carpets and draped furniture of the rich? That cheery room, with the sunshine bathing the very boards, it was a picture. Perhaps the sun loves cleanliness, and pours its treasure with more generous hands where it abounds. At all events, it made the coarse home of the Mays beautiful. Mother May and Father May the people called them, everybody. Their kindly hearts took in all humanity, no matter whether it were high or low, bond or free. Their home was on the edge of a broad street, running parallel with the wharves, and with the same splendor of the sun that whitened their windows glorified the harbor, and made the wings of the ships shine. The house was a wooden one, with a brown front door and two wooden steps leading up to it. There were curtains of linen at the spotless windows, there was a fire on the hearth for the early tea-getting, there was Mother May seated at her mending,

there was Father May just doffing his green pea-jacket for one of thinner texture and home-wear, and the sounds of music had just ceased. Mother May was one of those rare women whom age seems to mellow, not decay the faculties. There was a touch of red on either cheek, and a dash of silver in her laugh, and a merry twinkle in her eye yet. She was emphatically one of those of whom the Bible says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In all things, to her simple, yet prophetic mind, she saw Him who is the living, vital principle. Everybody who knew this felt her power; everybody but the wild young thing she had had under charge for the last fifteen years. She was up-stairs, now, the gay, thoughtless creature, coquetting with her hair and eyes and the looking-glass, humming between whiles, breaking off to admire herself, — standing back in a tragical attitude with folded hands and head thrown aside, while from her lips came the clear, liquid notes, charming the very air as they fell. Her trunk stood near, packed full, but open; her bonnet and shawl were spread out on the bed, and she seemed preparing for a journey. Presently she lifted the pins from her silken tresses, and they floated round her in wild, bright luxuriance, which the sunshine, catching, seemed to prison suddenly in a network of gold.

Presently a voice was heard calling her.

"I 'm coming," she answered, catching at her hair. "O, what *would* Mother May say if she knew what I was up to? She declares all public places like operas and theatres are Satan's strongholds. Perhaps they are; but I mean to see them, and sing in them too, if I can."

"So the girl is really going?" said Father May, with a twitch of his wrinkled jaws.

"Yes; and I don't know whether it 's a mercy or a snare," responded the good woman; "but I 'm called to hope it 's a mercy. Alonzo has her good at heart, I 'm sure."

"She 's growing too wild for us, and too handsome for her own good. You can't keep that kind of knowledge from a gal, and the boys about here are gitting bold. They 're not the kind I 'd like to see her married to."

"I don't know, father; a good, honest stevedore or ship-carpenter would be as good a match as we could expect under the circumstances, you know. Such a man would mind it less, perhaps."

"Perhaps," muttered Father May.

"But, poor thing! she ain't to blame for her mother's fault; and I don't know why she would n't marry as well as anybody. The music-master intends to make her capable of earning her own living, he says; and, after all, it ain't no use, as I know of, to shut up the gifts

of nater. Because her mother was ruined by her voice, it ain't no reason that she should be, — is it? Besides, her mother wanted to sing, and they would n't let her. That 's why she run away."

"Do tell me if she run away?" queried the old man.

"There," and she folded her hands together, helplessly, "it 's the first time it ever passed my lips. Now don't you ask no questions, Father May, because I 'm promised to silence; now don't, or you 'll distress me."

"Keep your counsel, mother, for all I care," said Father May; but he went with rather a brisker step than usual to take his pipe from its corner, and so solace his disappointment, for he had always wanted to know this secret concerning Lucille. At that moment she appeared, so demure and proper, that Mother May's eye brightened as she saw her.

"What 's going to be done with the piano, child?" she asked.

"O, that 's to stay here, of course, — don't you know you 're not going to lose me altogether, you dear old soul," and she threw her arms about Mother May's neck. "I may get dissatisfied, homesick, or mad, and want to come back again, just as like as not," she added, as Mother May held up a warning finger. "You

know what awful times you 've had with my temper. But don't you see that at any rate I sha'n't be so far off but what I shall come over here often, and play and sing for you? To be sure I shall."

"Ah! folks that have sudden fortunes come to them forget their poor relations," muttered Father May, shaking his head in the midst of a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"But I 'm not one of the ungrateful sort, as you 'll find out when I get rich; there 's nothing but what you shall have, particularly the gold-bowed spectacles."

"You silly child!" exclaimed Mother May, laughing through her tears; "stand back, now, and let me see how you look. Your gown 's not straight; it never is unless I fix it; pray what are you going to do without me? You 'll never look decent."

"O, there 'll be some kind, good fairy provided; there always is, you know, for such helpless things as I am." And as she stood there, she burst into a wild fragment of song, her voice so wonderfully rich and brilliant, her gypsy eyes so sparkling with the triumphant consciousness of her rare power, that Father May took his pipe from his mouth and listened with head inclined forward, while Mother May, good soul, turned her glance, which was tear-dim, towards the sunny harbor.

"There, I am good for nothing but to sing, am I? I get vexed with a needle, and abominate a broom, — but O music, divine music! I would give all the world, if I had it, to be the greatest singer of the day. Pray, where did I get my love and my gift, from father or mother?" she asked, suddenly turning to Mrs. May.

The old lady's cheek flushed scarlet, as she took up her mending again, and her eyes fell on her work. "From your mother," she said, dryly.

The girl was about to ask another question, when Loporta entered. Suddenly the archness of her manner changed to timidity. The master saluted the old couple with mingled affection and respect. He smiled as he spoke to Lucille, who had drawn back near the old foster-father.

"I expected to find you ready," he said.

"I am all ready," was her reply, — "only my bonnet and shawl. I 'll be down in a moment." And she ran past him up stairs.

"It will be very lonesome here when she 's gone," said Father May, knocking the ashes from his spent pipe. "Still I know it 's better for her; she 's getting restless here."

"You have been like parents to her," said Loporta. It was evident, by his gloomy look and fixed eye, that his thoughts were elsewhere.

At last he queried, abruptly, — "Have you the

miniature within reach?" The woman said, "Yes," and, exchanging a look with her husband, arose and left the room. She returned very shortly with a small package, which she handed to him. The master's hand trembled as he took it. With a hasty motion, he deposited it in his breast-pocket, and had it fairly buttoned over when Lucille entered. A carriage drove up to the door; Father May brought down the trunk and the boxes, — both good people took an affectionate leave of the young girl, who seemed almost like a child to them, and Lucille, with a palpitating heart, was on her way to her new home, full of high hopes and great anticipations. Loporta was very silent. He sat on the opposite seat, but his eyes were steadily directed towards the street, and he was so plunged in thought that he did not speak to her until they arrived at the house. Then Lucille was ushered in, and greeted by Madeline. Madam Porta was not at home, she said to the inquiries of the master.

"You will know what to do?"

"O yes," Madeline replied, looking smilingly towards the little figure, whose great brown eyes had in them a shade of alarm, "if she will come with me, I will show her her room."

It was a little box of a place near the chamber of Madeline, but quite comfortable, and even pretty. It would have suited Lucille, in that

house, if it had been the garret. She seemed to feel an attraction towards Madeline, and kept giving her shy, pleasant glances.

"You are musical, I know by your looks," at last she said, when the little trunks were put in place, and Madeline had offered to do anything more that she needed.

"I am very fond of music," Madeline smilingly replied.

"Do you sing?"

"I am not gifted with a powerful voice," was the answer; "I sing a little."

"O, it must be delightful to have such a man as Loporta for one's own uncle!" said the girl, in confidence.

"He is not my own uncle, you know."

"Well, it would seem all the same to me; no one can help loving Loporta. Do you know I think him the grandest, handsomest, and best man in the world?"

"Indeed, you have formed an exalted opinion."

"No higher than he deserves; he has been so good to me. Why, I remember him ever since I was a little wee girl; he has been almost the only friend I ever had, — but I am very foolish to run on so. I wonder what I am to do here, — whether I am to live just as if I were in school? Are you the young lady

who is going to be so kind as to teach me? because I'm such a dull scholar in everything *but* music. I hate books unless they are about that. I'm afraid you'll grow impatient with me, though I'll try to do the best I can." She was leaning over her trunk, then, poking about it, tossing things over here and there, without any regard to order whatever.

As she finished speaking, she threw her head back, and looked up with a quick smile. Her hair, flung from her forehead by the motion, hung breezily about her temples and shoulders, and Madeline started as she saw in that young, brilliant face a living portrait of Loporta. Outlines, features, expression, all were his.

CHAPTER X.

THE ANGORA.

All day long she thought of it. The impression had given her pain at first. When Lucille had smoothed her hair again, the likeness was not so apparent. Without that lightning flash of strange intelligence, revealed to Madeline that morning, she might have failed to recognize it; but now it was constantly visible to her. She wondered if that was why Madam Porta felt averse to her presence, — if she had ever, by any such chance, noticed her resemblance to the master? Often, after that eventful day, she pondered upon it.

"You had better go down stairs with me," she said to Lucille, towards evening, "and wait till Madam Porta comes. She has been gone all day, and will be home soon."

"I do dread to see Madam Porta!" exclaimed Lucille.

"Why?" asked Madeline, curiously.

"O, I have an apprehension when I think of her! I don't believe she likes me at all. I wish she did, for I *could* like her very much." They

had come to the passage that branched off to the principal music-room.

"Have you seen the den?" asked Lucille.

"The den!" exclaimed Madeline, half laughing.

"Why yes, did n't you know? where the great organ is, — where Loporta composes. Come, I go there whenever I please."

Madeline shrank back. "Perhaps it would not be agreeable to my uncle."

"He 's not there now; and, dear me, it 's a public room. A great many of his scholars come in, go there and play or write as long as they please, whether he is there or not." She had turned the corner, Madeline reluctantly following. The door was thrown open; the lofty room seemed grander than ever in its proportions, and from some nook emerged the soft music of an Æolian harp. Presently a figure, wrapped in a long white sheet, came from a recess, and walked slowly to and fro. The gathering darkness, the obscurity at the farther end of the room, and this ghostly apparition, startled Madeline; her cheeks grew pale.

"Never mind that," whispered Lucille; "it is only old Marmot. You must know he fancies himself a ghost; but on everything else he is sane enough. The poor thing was disappointed in love, they say, and has never got over it. Do you

see this great organ?" She told its history, briefly, in an undertone. Madeline listened with absorbing interest, but was not sorry when she left the precincts of the den, and emerged into the pleasant sitting-room, with its pictures and flowers. Lucille crouched upon a low ottoman, and sat gazing about her, half pleased, half frightened. Every unusual noise sent a flush to her face, for she dreaded the coming of Madam Porta. Growing tired of sitting, she first admired the roses, then stood a moment intent upon the pictures, — then unwittingly and thoughtlessly opened a door. It led into the little closet sacred to the Angora. The creature sprang up, with a fondling purr for its mistress.

"O, you beautiful thing!" cried Lucille, as at that moment Madeline caught sight of her indiscretion. A sharp scream followed,—the cat had leaped at her, snarling, and fixed its teeth in her hand. She shook it off, and fled to the farther end of the room, where she fell, with her face in the lap of Madeline, sobbing with terror and pain. The cat followed angrily, and sprung upon her, growling like an enraged tiger. Madeline sat helpless, not daring to move, fascinated by the glowing eyes that had a tinge of red flame in them; but her steady glance saved her. The creature, standing erect, superb, its throat swelled, and the silvery fleece agitated with the

short, sharp breath, never moved while she looked. The door-bell rang. Madam Porta's voice was heard in the hall. The ruffled bosom of Indiana subsided, — the passion-puffed-fur fell lower on the breast, — the animal leaped to the floor as her mistress entered.

"What is it?" cried Madam Porta, standing transfixed at sight of Madeline motionless, the cat at liberty, and the figure that like a dead weight hung over Madeline's lap.

"By accident, I suppose, she opened the wrong door; the cat flew at her, bit her, I believe, and — I think she has fainted." She lifted the heavy head.

Madam Porta came forward, the cat under one arm. "It 's the new pupil, I suppose," she said, in a lower voice. "She brings trouble at the commencement," she added, under her breath, — throwing her cat in the closet a moment after. "There, stay there! you shall have no supper to-night for your mischief!"

Coming hastily forward, she helped Madeline, who was bathing the pale face. Presently the girl gasped, and came to recollection. She looked wildly at Madam Porta, and then, like a child, burst into tears.

"She had better go to her room," said the Madam, coldly; "she is excited, and needs repose. Stay; I see her finger is bleeding. I'll get you

some liniment and cloth. It is better to bleed. After a while you may bind it up for her."

Madeline was not sorry for this new burden. She saw, intuitively, what was expected of her. The poor girl was given tacitly in her charge. Through suffering she had grown mentally stronger; she needed to feel a constant sympathy, a responsibility, to make life in this place so full of varying incident, so beautiful with melody, a something higher than mere existence. Besides, a strong attraction drew her towards this helpless child who had never known the true, self-sacrificing love of a mother; this beautiful creature, so dangerously gifted. This was, perhaps, to be her mission, to bring the balance right in her volatile nature, — volatile because ungoverned, — through a discipline ever watchful, and a cultivation that had as much regard to the heart as the head.

"Does it pain you?" she asked, tenderly.

"Very much; but it is not that, — I am so grieved to think it disliked me," said Lucille, in a voice full of tears.

"It is very savage; it would have sprung at me, anybody but my aunt. It is not a domestic cat, but an Angora, a foreigner."

"O, that is it!" and Lucille looked very much relieved. "But what did I open the door for? It was so thoughtless. I am always doing such foolish little things."

"It *was* rather thoughtless," said Madeline, gently. "You must try to think. That will save you from careless habits."

"I suppose Madam Porta thought it was a dreadful thing."

"She did not say so."

"You are very kind," said Lucille, after a moment of reflection. "I am so glad you're here. I should die if only Madam Porta and I were under this roof together. O forgive me! I forgot she was your aunt. I'm afraid I shall be doing or saying something wrong all the time. I can do nothing but sing."

Madeline laughed at her woe-begone face; she could not help it, although she had felt a momentary indignation.

"You and my aunt will be good friends yet," she said, quietly. "There is the bell for supper."

"Please let me stay here," cried Lucille. "I could not eat a mouthful."

"She prefers not to come down," said Madeline, as she met her aunt's glance at table.

"Homesick already?" asked Loporta, trying to laugh, while Madam pulled the tea-tray forward nervously. "Well, my dear, what were you saying?" he continued to his wife, as Madeline seated herself.

"That it is almost time for our musical re-

unions, and I have promised one or two of my friends an opportunity to sing. They are very anxious to obtain situations, either in choirs or as concert-singers, and are deserving and needy. When shall we get ready for the first one?"

"Let me see," said Loporta. "It is now August. September is on us within a week; as soon as you please after that. I shall be dreadfully driven for a few days."

"And Loporta, you know our parlor carpet is absolutely worn out. You have put me off for a year, now, with promises. I am ashamed of its shabbiness."

"My dear, I really don't know —" began the master, but she interrupted him.

"Really, Mr. Porta, you might as well do *me* a favor, as a stranger. I have *some* claims upon you." She must have forgotten Madeline, for, looking at her, she turned red, and bit her lip with vexation. Loporta showed by his countenance that her words distressed and lacerated him to the very verge of cruelty. He grew pale; but, with his usually mild voice and manner, made reply, that he would gratify her if possible, and left the table.

The evening brought company. Madeline would have retired, but her aunt pressed her to stay. Lucille did not come down. She was crying like a child up there in the dark, but no-

body knew it, for she had pretended to be asleep when Madeline looked in at her a little while before. Among the visitors came Roget and Mr. Minot. The latter Madeline had never met before. Roget, with easy politeness, monopolized her during the early part of the evening. At first she disliked it; but the eloquence of his manner, the soft, luminous magnetism of his glance, insensibly won upon her. He was a man of more than twice her years, mature in thought and expression, with a singular faculty of fixing the attention by the fascination of his voice and manner. Mr. Minot gave her but passing attention. He was here, there, and everywhere, flitting, touching, laughing, — a little, quick, volatile laugh, — his handsome face almost transparent, reflecting the soul-sparkle, the subtile genius below. Now he was lauding a book of poems which he held, gesticulating airily; again, he read a lecture on flowers, clothing it in colors and tints of language as soft and rich as theirs. Then he was off on singers and their dress, their looks, their manners, their foibles, quick as thought catching their peculiarities and mimicking them in a dumb pantomime that was irresistibly amusing. During all this he was not indifferent to the ladies, or sparing of compliments; but acted like a beautiful child, conscious of admiration, and willing to exhaust his

gifts in pleasing. He came towards Madeline and Roget.

"Is he giving you a lecture, Miss Clement? He 's very clever at them, I assure you, — gives me a dozen a week, and charges nothing for the delivery."

"Take care, and don't disclose your real character," said the Frenchman, laughingly.

"O, not that I deserve them in the least; I assure you I don't, — but the thing is a mania with him, and he must have something to practise on." And he was off.

"What a child," said Roget, gravely, turning again to Madeline. "I have to lecture and watch him too."

"He sings well, I have heard," said Madeline.

"He does everything well; but he lacks concentration. If I were not after him with my lectures, as he calls them, day after day, he would never stick to his six hours of practice. But he is doing admirably with three years' tuition. I do not hesitate to say, that, if he is painstaking and careful, he will yet rank with the first talent of the age. But there is so much danger in this strange thing we call genius."

"Because it is seldom rightly balanced, I suppose," said Madeline, simply.

"What do you mean by rightly balanced?"

Now Madeline knew well enough what she

meant, but those cool, audacious eyes confused her. She became conscious that she was not in the midst of a little circle in a minister's house, where theology was discussed and religious opinions expressed; nevertheless, she felt it would be shirking duty not to explain in a measure what she had suggested.

"I mean, that such a one needs a deeply rooted principle, a religious principle, to keep him from danger."

He smiled strangely as he answered: "He needs the principle of strong self-respect; that ought to be a religious principle."

"But unfortunately it is not, — indeed, it is very far from a real, vital goodness, attainable only from a higher source than man."

He turned suddenly round, and searched her face with those deep, penetrating glances. "Unfortunately, I cannot agree with you, that we need any higher help than our own," he said, settling himself back in his seat again.

"That makes but little difference as to the fact," she replied, quietly. "Your belief or unbelief cannot affect God's truth."

"Upon my word, Miss Clement," he said, his cheeks flushing scarlet, "you have said more to me than any minister would have dared. I am a sworn enemy to modern Christianity, — or rather, I should say to modern beliefs. I see by

your eyes, that you are prepared with an answer, but pray do not let us quarrel to-night. Some other time I will go into the matter with you in all its length and breadth, and if you can convince me into Christianity, you will have unmade a sceptic of forty years' standing. You see that I am not unwilling to confess my age."

"O, that does not frighten me at all," said Madeline, "since, as I told you before, I rely in no way upon my own power. That which called a world out of chaos could easily call a human soul out of darkness."

"Ah, there you are beyond my depth," he said, with an uneasy contraction of the brows. "By the way, would you like to hear Minot sing?"

"Yes indeed, very much," she replied, with enthusiasm.

"Then I 'll see if I can't coax Loporta into the organ-loft. There 's that about his singing with the organ that I can't describe, unless by saying that the instrument knows him, and takes something of his humanity."

He went away for a few moments. When he returned, Loporta had invited them up to his den. They went, young Minot following with a most ludicrous affectation of despair, beating his breast, and protesting that he was out of tune. Loporta would have but a single candle lighted. That,

placed in a recess of the organ, threw one gigantic shadow, that deepened into darkness black as night, as it rolled down the room. Marmot emerged from his sheet. The master touched the door-panels with reverence, — opened them, — and then seemed swayed by some intense excitement. His lips quivered, — his face, by the one flame, looked white to ethereality, — the very locks of his silvery hair seemed to tremble as the great crank turned, and from under his touch issued the weird, wild piping, varied to so many moods, even in that first moment. Young Minot, too, as he stood there with head thrown back, seemed to have lost all his bravado, — to have suddenly become as a meek and humble worshipper. The small light, throwing his face half in shadow, gave it an expression of unearthliness that no living pencil could have caught; his eyelids were partially closed, — his lips tremulous. The elements of a poetic genius stirred within him, to give soul to his voice. Nor were the listeners disappointed; the delicate touches of passion and feeling, the rich tones surpassing everything that Madeline had ever imagined in the range of man's possession, the deep, calm solemnity of certain passages, brought tears of emotion to her eyes. It seemed as if no one drew breath until it was finished.

"Can you understand?" whispered Roget, who stood near Madeline.

"It is Italian," she replied, — "a requiem, is it not?"

"A requiem. He composed it himself — Loporta — at midnight, here, with, as Marmot asserts, the spirit of his brother standing over his right shoulder. That 's only the declaration of a shattered intellect, however. The dead never return."

"Not to be visible," murmured Madeline, her lip trembling, her frame violently agitated, as she thought of her mother. "That they love us still, and come to us, I must believe, — for it is not long since — " expression failed her.

"I understand," said Roget, with a delicacy that she felt. "They are going, perhaps you would like to pass out first." The tears were falling heavily, and she could not repress them. She glided into the hall, and turned into the passage leading to her chamber. A small figure, clad in white, fled precipitately before her, preceded her into her room, and fell, sobbing heavily, upon the bed.

"Why, Lucille!" exclaimed Madeline, startled out of her own sadness, "what is the matter? where have you been?"

"I heard them going into the den, and I crept out. Presently I heard the singing, — O that singing! Who was it, Miss Madeline, — was it an angel?"

"Very far from that, I suspect," said Madeline, half amused and half annoyed as the girl continued to sob. "It was Mr. Minot. He sings unusually well. But what are you crying for? he is not singing now."

"I don't know, I can't help it. I seem to hear it. It made me feel as if everybody I loved was dead, Loporta and all"; and her anguish increased.

"But nobody is dead, or like to die, as I know of."

"I told you I was foolish," said poor Lucille, with a little snap. "I should be afraid to trust myself where those great singers are, for if I could n't cry, my heart would burst. There! I 'll make an end of it — I *wont* be silly"; and she sat up, bobbing her hands back and forth as she wiped her eyes with nervous resolution, and looked so odd and ludicrous, that Madeline had much ado to keep from laughing.

"And here I am in your room, I suppose; I did n't know which door I took. O dear! I was so lonesome!"

"Suppose you stay here, and sleep with me to-night."

"May I? O how kind you are! Thank you, I shall be very glad. Are you going down?"

"Only to excuse myself to my aunt; then I shall come up again; I have some letters to write."

Lucille dried her tears, and was contented. And when Madeline came up-stairs again, and sat down to her little writing-desk, she was conscious that every movement was followed by those large, tender eyes, but it did not make her restless as some glances did. In truth, her heart yearned unaccountably towards this lonely girl whose best friend was Loporta. As for Lucille, lying there, she made many a fair promise to herself that she would repay the kindness that had been thus proffered her, by docility and diligence, and, with that last superb, but wofully sad strain yet ringing in her ears, she went gently to sleep, thinking of Mother and Father May. Madeline wrote for an hour, smiling as her pen fled rapidly over the delicate paper, until at last ending — (but no, I will not tell how the precious letter closed) — she folded it, and sought her rest.

CHAPTER XI.

ROGET.

Lucille could not decide whether in her change of homes she had found happiness, or the reverse. She felt painfully at times that she was in the way. Hours were spent at the window, looking in the direction of the dear old house that stood facing bayward. If Loporta had asked her if she wished to return, I think she would have said no, with all her heart. Yet it was a sort of mournful pleasure to sit there and imagine that she was very unhappy, and wanted those two dear, caressing old people round her all the time. Study was to her a terrible task, — and she was continually begging Madeline to abridge her studies. She had hardly found all the happiness she expected, for to her too sensitive heart the madam was cruel, the master cold. She thought he reproved her with unnecessary harshness when she went wrong, and looked in vain for that old, sweet, fatherly manner she had learned to expect from so many years of tenderness. Other fancies began to torment her, born of

this change. Why was she cast a lone waif upon the charity of others? Who was the unknown benefactor who was represented as having ministered to her wants all her life? Was it a father? If so, why did he never come and see her, or send her some word or token of affection? Who was *she?* in the words of that plaintive song of Hood's: —

> "Who was her father,
> Who was her mother?
> Had she a sister,
> Had she a brother?"

These thoughts she never uttered aloud, even to Madeline. A certain delicate reticence, which she had never displayed in her character before, kept her silent. She little knew how often these same thoughts and guesses occupied the mind of her new friend. Meantime Madeline had heart and hands full. Lucille was almost hopelessly heedless; and as the pastor's daughter had been taught that cleanliness and neatness were of the first consequence in a woman's accomplishments, these irregularities of the poor girl annoyed her sadly. Not that Lucille was absolutely uncleanly in her habits, but the taste of neatness was not hers, either natural or acquired. She had a fine figure, but her clothes were carelessly and inelegantly put on; pins supplied the place of strings or hooks, wrinkles

were uncared for, and symmetry of length in skirts and dresses completely overlooked. These things Madeline was determined to rectify, and time and patience were both sadly infringed upon in her ceaseless efforts. Lucille was affectionate, and obeyed through her heart; but the power of habit is almost omnipotent, and her warfare was an unequal one.

It was a pleasant morning in the first of December. The house was undergoing that experience which all houses of pretension go through with as regularly as children with the measles or whooping cough, — a thorough cleaning for the winter. Housemaids practised frantic evolutions, with arms bared to the elbows and faces red as January apples. Chairs stood lugubriously piled up, and bare floors underwent, with the utmost meekness, the process of sand-scrubbing. Carpets were well shaken, and in some instances well beaten, and in the large front hall stood rolls of bright new Brussels; for madam had carried her point, and gained the new carpet for the parlor. So everywhere the house was in a state of the most intense excitement, save in the den, the lower music-room, and the private sitting-room of madam, where, after her directions were through, the latter sat herself down to sew with her niece. Lucille was practising laboriously, and the tones

of the piano came faintly through to where the two women were sitting.

"And how do you like Roget?" asked Madam Porta.

The suddenness of the question startled Madeline; she blushed a little, upon which her aunt smiled to herself.

"He seems a nice gentleman," was the reply. "I wonder if he is any relation to Roget de Lysle? I never hear his name but it sets me to thinking of him. He composed the Marseilles Hymn, you know. I suppose you think it a foolish question."

"O no! he might be, so passionately fond of music as he seems; — but is there not something remarkably fascinating about his appearance? Do you know I could n't bear his face at first; but now I think there is a certain grand beauty in it. He is singular, though, in his opinions as his appearance, and he really must admire *you* very much."

"O no!" said Madeline, hastily; "we never agree. He says my face is the signal for a pitched battle."

"So much the better, my dear. People that begin with a quarrel are apt to end with a wedding. I've seen it myself in more cases than one."

"O, don't talk of that, aunt!" exclaimed

Madeline, with a hotter flush. "I beg you wont."

"Why, Maddy, don't you know he's a splendid catch?" asked her aunt, laughing at her distress. No less than a round million, and I don't know but two. Why, he has one of the most splendid mansions in the city; and only an old aunt of eighty between him and another fortune. Wait till you see his establishment; he gives two or three grand *soirees* through the winter; we always go."

"I beg you not to think, aunt, that — that it is anything more than a — a pleasant friendship. If I thought you really were in earnest, I should never be frank and easy in his society again."

"If you take it so seriously, I wont, of course; but, in sober truth, Madeline, if you marry that man, you will live like a queen to the end of your days."

"No doubt of it, aunty; but I am something like your Angora," she answered, laughing; "only one man can conquer me, and that one is decidedly not Roget."

"Come in," cried Madam Porta, who was in the best of humors, as a knock sounded. It was handsome Mr. Minot.

"I appear before you, ladies, in the deepest anguish"; and he bowed submissively.

"Pray, what can we do for you?" asked Madam Porta, laughing.

"Loporta, my good master, is in the last extremity of hurry. Three patients — I beg pardon, pupils — to attend to within the hour, and mountains of manuscript to copy. Must be done by the afternoon. Roget is at work; I, unfortunately, must practise, or I lose my fame. What 's to be done?"

"I sometimes copy for him," said Mrs. Porta, looking over to Madeline; "but —"

Madeline was folding her work. "If I can be of the least assistance," she said, quietly.

"My dear young lady, you know not what terrible crisis you have saved us from," he said, gazing admiringly at Madeline's sweet face. "Shall I tell our agitated instructor that help is at hand?"

"Tell him what you please," said Madeline, smiling at his grotesque earnestness; "I will be there in a moment."

"Thanks," he said, and, with an extravagant gesture, was gone.

"What a monkey!" laughed Madam Porta. "That man is never rational save when he sings or plays. There he shows that he has a soul. Look out for him, Maddy; unless Roget endows him, he 's as poor as a church mouse, — and the Lord pity a poor genius."

Madeline went up slowly into the music-den. She was thinking, perhaps she had seemed too

eager to offer as she did. If her aunt had said nothing previously with reference to Roget, she would never have dreamed of accusing herself. But now, might she not think that she was anxious to be with Roget? And yet, what nonsense; he old enough to be her father, and by no word or look to be judged as a lover. She would go straight on, be as frank, as kind, as ready to convince him as ever. She would banish all surmises which were uncharitable, all hints which were superfluous. Saying this to herself, she reached the den, and unconsciously tried to avoid Roget's eye. He sat just back of the writing-desk, at a curious little table, and seemed pleased when she came in. She was provoked to feel her cheek flush, when at last she met him face to face, and gave him a cool good-morning.

"Here I am at twenty-five cents an hour," he said, laughing; "how much do you work for?"

"More than that," she quietly responded, taking a seat, and waiting till Loporta, who appeared jaded so early, should supply her. The master looked up, and smiled. Never so saintly and never so sad had that noble face seemed before, to her. That look of patient resignation stamped on the soft outlines of his countenance told of some trial long endured. He offered her two or three sheets of music-paper; the score lay beside her. Meanwhile Minot had taken up his

violin, and was going very slowly through some passages of Beethoven's music. He was very grave now, and gave his whole attention to his practice. It was a bland day; one window, lifted a little, let in soft puffs of air; all was quiet, save the scratching of pens and the almost superhuman tones of the beautiful Straduarious. Madeline sat opposite Roget. She was absorbed in her occupation. Once or twice she felt rather than knew that Roget paused in his work. The third time, looking up unwittingly, she found his eyes bent upon her, as if he were studying her.

"I thought I could," he said, softly.

Her glance expressed inquiry.

"Will you to look up," he replied, with a smile.

"Do you often practise in that way?" she asked, smiling; "because if you do, you are dangerous, and I shall put myself out of your power."

"I beg you will not think me in earnest," he said, dreading perhaps that she would move, as he saw her direct a glance towards Loporta.

"I did not, of course," she replied; "and if I did, I am not afraid of you."

"You have no reason to be," he replied, with something like a sigh; "but really you are so unlike most other women that I know, I cannot help watching you. Have you thought of those questions in theology since we met

last? We can copy and talk too, a little, I suppose."

"No,—I never trouble my head with theology: if I can't bring things clear to my comprehension, I go right on."

"How?"

"In the way I have marked out for myself."

"And that way is what?"

"There is but one right way," she said, simply, with a straightforward glance. "Did you ever hear of One who said, eighteen hundred years ago, 'I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me'?"

His face flushed. "You know," he said, "I am not a believer."

"But I am; and that is the reason theology never troubles me."

He sighed again, as he gazed in her glowing face.

"I would give worlds to think as you do; but I expect I am beyond hope and faith, and everything of that kind. I knew an old man once who declared that God dwelt in him,—perhaps He did, but to my mind the matter would not bear the test of calm, scientific investigation. I could not believe it."

"But *he* did."

"O, of course, most religiously."

"Pray, was he an insincere man?"

"No, I think he was perfectly sincere."

"He was a bigot, and intolerant of other people's views, I suppose."

"I can't say he was; — no; he was rather liberal."

"You could not depend upon his word, perhaps."

"O yes, he was the soul of honor."

"He might have been a hypocrite."

"No; I could declare that his conduct was free from reproach. Old Father Mills shall have that credit from me; he was one of the best men I ever knew."

"Then could you bring the test of calm, scientific investigation to prove that if everything else he said was truth, that assertion alone was not? If you could not prove it, — how could you disprove it? I think the old man *did* prove that what he said was a fact, by his well-ordered life and conversation. The Scriptures expressly say that God may dwell in our hearts; God's word is above science, or perhaps is the highest embodied form of science, to be comprehended only when the soul shall have larger faculties and wider scope."

He gave her a peculiar glance, and was silent.

"You will laugh at a woman's reasoning, I suppose," she said, a little piqued at his non-replying.

"You have given me something to think of,

Miss Clement. Laugh at you! I never was further from laughing at anything than I am now. I remember ten years ago groping at night along a stony road. I was miles up in the air on the edge of overhanging cliffs. I had been all day bedded as it were in deep masses of rock, walking under the shadow of towers that seemed shattered from creation; sometimes looking down as it were miles into the valley, feeling so isolated and small that the effect was almost benumbing to body and soul. In one of my erratic curves, I lost my guide, or he lost me, in consequence of too frequent potations from the horn at his side. For a while I felt secure of finding the path; but as darkness increased, so did my uneasiness. I hurried forward, but the more I walked the more I was barricaded in by those awful masses of moveless granite. I never shall forget with what crushing swiftness the night came on. I had lost all signs of a path, and the stones grew loose, and rattled under my feet. It seemed to me as if every step I took might be shortened by a precipice, but I still ventured once again, still again, till with an awful shock a fragment of stone gave way under me. I threw my arms out wildly, blindly, and as I was hurled forward, grasped with frantic strength at the branches of a tree, and there, feeling with my feet, I found

a projection upon which I could partly rest my weight. Where I was, over what I was hanging, whether the foothold was solid and would support me till morning, I could not tell. The wind was rising, and moaned like a sick giant. The boughs of the tree creaked dismally. Above there were no stars, no sky discernible; it might be that my roof was rock." His voice grew solemn. "There *was* a strange presence with me that night, or I fancied it. It was a night of conflict. I lived over everything; another such season would send me mad. What was that presence? It enshrouded me, it moved with me; it breathed as I breathed, it shuddered as I shuddered, it ran through my thrilled nerves like lightning, it incorporated itself with the very essence of my mind, so that I seemed to be *it*. At times it raised the hair on my head, so weird-like and solemn and unearthly it was. It inspired me with a sick terror that I cannot describe; it unmanned me. What was that presence? it was there, almost palpable. I fancied that if I dared put forth my hand I could feel it, — it was at times a creeping mystery, coming stealthily towards me, at times an enveloping and overpowering sense, too awful to be borne. I waited there, fighting with the idea, or *it*, till the dim gray of morning bent its wings eastward. Then I could begin to

perceive. Was I resting upon nothing? The great tree — great in diameter — twisted itself out from between two banks of stone, and looked as if it had fought for its life every inch of the way. Gracious Heaven! Miss Clement, — what guided me to that spot? It was the only place for hundreds of yards where I could have stepped on solid ground, or have found the protecting arms of a tree. One movement this side or that, and I had been dashed to atoms. I shouted; led by the sound of my voice, my guide, who had not been far off after all, found me, and with the aid of ropes, and that blessed tree, I gained the firm ground again. I give you my word, Miss Clement, that since that time I have been an altered man; but you see I am groping yet for the truth."

"Ah! you have lost your guide, — and, like the guide of the mountains, he is all the time not very far off."

He seemed struck with her reply.

"But what was that presence, Miss Clement? It was surely not him you call God. It was too awful, too tempting, for that."

"I don't know; but I cannot question the fact that somebody, or some influence, was there. It produced too deep an impression upon you for me to doubt. We cannot convict persons against their inward consciences, you know:

it would be absurd. There, I have finished. I wish music could give us the same pleasure in reading it that a book does; but sound must be added to sense, — a rare combination, humanly speaking. I see you are on the last note."

"Yes," he answered, gravely, "I have earned my quarter."

At that moment Marmot came towards Loporta. "Mrs. Savigny sends word that she cannot take her music-lesson this morning, being indisposed," he said.

"Good! there 's one bore the less to-day. I respect Mrs. Savigny, — I like her money; but I am sorry she will not believe me, when I tell her she is an incorrigible dolt. The humdrum things that poor woman gets up to inflict upon her friends, and calls it music! — bah! And then she always takes care to say that Professor Loporta is her master, — bringing me in for a share of contempt and dilettante weariness. O dear! I wish people knew their vocation. Hers is to pet poodle-dogs, not to compose music, and father the inspiration off on me. Come, Roget, Minot" (the latter had thrown himself carelessly on a lounge, and was thrumming Marmot's old guitar), "I feel like stretching my fingers. Let 's have a trio: it should be a quartette, if we had Bodgis here, — splendid accompaniment for the piano."

"Why, here 's Miss Clement; perhaps she will play: it 's delightfully difficult," said Minot, springing to his feet.

"My dear, do you play at sight?" asked Loporta. "Why, of course you do; I remember, now, your aunt spoke of it. Sit down, and let us try this quartette. Marmot, bring me hither my 'Soul of Beauty,' — quick, man!"

Loporta took the instrument, and held it for a moment tenderly against his bosom. It was, in truth, a violin not to be matched. Its elegant proportions and graceful outlines, the polished ebony rests, the stops, flecked with spots of gold, and its age, made it a thing invaluable. Loporta led off, the rest following in ravishing harmony. The master's eyes sparkled no less at Madeline's success than at the effect of the splendid combination.

"Why, my child, that is superb!" he exclaimed. "I had no idea you were capable of such a touch. Lightness and strength at the same time. Let us try it again; three such fiddles as these it would be hard to find, let alone such a pianist!" Madeline blushed, particularly, as she saw by Roget's admiring looks that he indorsed the master. The quartette was succeeded by one of Mozart's quintettes, in which Roget took the violoncello, and Marmot joined with the violin. Madeline felt an inspiration,

quickened by these surroundings. The subtile harmonies enwrapped her spirit as in a garment of enchantment, whose folds, woven out of pure happiness, glittered with melody as with gems. She felt herself lifted above the world, and wished she could live always in such an atmosphere. This aroma, if delicious, was dangerous. Not so dangerous for her, however, as it might have been for poor little Lucille, who, in the far music-room down stairs, was vigorously working all this time at her lesson, utterly unconscious how fast the hours were flying.

At last the music ceased. Madeline, almost breathless with excitement, took a hurried leave of the performers, and returned to her aunt. Roget drew on his gloves, slowly and absently; Minot pulled his on vigorously, stopping now and then to point out some excellence in the passages that still stood upon the piano. At last they left the den, and Loporta went back to his copying. Roget and Minot passed down the stairs; the latter laid his hand lightly on the coat-sleeve of his benefactor, and both paused. O, the sweet, sweet voice that floated out from the near door of the music-room! They stood with breath suspended; then Minot crept forward cautiously and looked stealthily in. The young face that met his gaze, its dark, clear eyes uplifted in piteous appealing, the hair shaken back from the brow, and floating free on neck and shoulder,

the throat swelling with rich sound, the unconscious grace of every movement, fastened more than the attention of the thoughtless young man: he smiled quietly as he rejoined Roget, and they left the house together.

"Who is it?" the latter asked.

"How do I know? I have seen her before. I think she stops at the house. Why yes, to be sure, the likeness *is* wonderful, — and there is gossip enough. But Loporta is as blameless as an angel; I 'd risk my soul almost on that."

"On what, Minot?"

"That — his daughter; — no, no; I don't mean that, — the pupil, the new scholar. O, I forget; you have never seen her. I met her only the other day. Well, she *does* look like Loporta for all the world, — just now she did; an accidental likeness, of course."

"What are you raving about, Minot?"

"Nothing; it merely took me by surprise, that beautiful creature! She is to be a public singer, I suppose, — why! she 'll surpass all the prima donnas; — the voice! what a compass! what ease of execution! Nothing, sir; I was only talking to myself, a habit of mine, you know."

"If I was n't sure, I should think you had been drinking wine, Minot."

"Not to-day; last night I was tempted. The deuse gets into me, I think, when I am away from you. If they offer me wine, I can't resist

it. It 's, 'Minot, just sing this little air for me'; or, 'Please hum this little song'; or, 'Minot, have a glass of wine'; and I can't say 'No' to either. What am I to do about it?"

"Do! why conquer that accursed disposition to say Yes," growled Roget, frowning. "You musicians have a leaning to Satan, I begin to believe; an aptitude for diabolism. You are led off if a finger beckons. Look at me; I have but to speak, and my tables might groan with wine; yet I abstain."

"But how was it in your youth, mentor mine, — were you abstemious then?"

"No; but God knows what a punishment came on me for all my sins. If I thought the story would benefit you, I 'd tell it some time."

"Do, Roget, to-day. I 'll lay it to heart, I promise you."

"No, no; not to-day. But here we are; come in."

The noble façade of a splendid building loomed up before Roget and his companion. Roget was prouder of his house than anything he possessed. He had designed it, and superintended its erection from the corner-stone to the last brick that was laid. There was no sham-work about that, his *chef d'œuvre*, — not a weak spot, not a defective board. Inside and out, alike harmonious in proportions in all the details that go to make perfection in architecture.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARITY.

They passed up the marble steps. The door was opened by a porter, clerical in dress and bearing, Ethiopian in face and dialect. Minot seemed at home. He threw his hat carelessly on the rack, and sauntered in at the first door that he found open. He went towards the grand piano that stood opposite, and touched a few bold chords.

"Music," he muttered, half to himself, "always music. I wish I could think of something else; or perhaps I should say, I wish my temperament was less fickle, enthusiastic. Roget, give me something to do."

"My library has been under repairs," said Roget. "The books are now ready to be put back on the shelves; go and busy yourself with that."

"Pah! that's drudgery," said Minot, impatiently.

"Perhaps you will come to dinner, then?"

"Ah! that's more like it. Yes, I'm always ready for a song, or a dinner."

"Or mischief," added Roget.

"Yes, excitement of any kind; that 's my fault."

"I 'm tempted to believe you are lazy," said Roget, as he led the way to his dining-room.

"Should n't wonder if you are right. I feel myself that I am disposed that way. Perhaps I want a motive."

"You want a wife," responded Roget, gravely.

"A wife! pray how am I to take care of a wife? I can hardly support myself."

"If you had a wife you would have a motive, and would learn to work. Besides, you get enough at your concerts to live with economy, if you choose to. If you did not know so many young men about town who live by their wits, it would be better for you."

"How can one help knowing men, if one goes into society?"

"One can help being intimate with the worst among them. Granted that there are some fine men in the professions, — the fancy professions, perhaps I should say, — the majority are reckless and profligate. What do you get in return for your costly wine-suppers, such as I hear you give occasionally? Only the worst kind of contamination."

"Who has been playing the spy on me?" asked the young man, flushing as he half arose from the table.

"Nobody. Be calm; I learned it by the merest accident, and am intending not to blame, only to warn you. Believe me, I have your highest interest at heart. I have lived among singers and artists all my life; I know the excesses of men of genius, and how they are exaggerated by their enemies, and overestimated by their friends. You are gifted with sensibilities as exquisite as those of the finest poet. Your imagination dresses the commonest, even the coarsest things, in colors as beautiful as the rainbow. You enter into everything with enthusiasm; you sport on the very brink of dissipation, and dare the utmost. But giving way to these impulses, you will throw away all that is highest in your nature, and become a mere creature of impulse, carried away by every gust of passion, and finally, with genius wrecked and mind imbecile, pass down to the grave, as hundreds have who commenced with a career as fair as your own promises. Now, Minot, I would save you from such degradation."

"Degradation!" said the young man, haughtily, lifting himself till he sat erect, superb, in his young, manly beauty.

"Ah, Minot! you may defy the worst. I tell you, men as nobly gifted, as handsome, as strong as yourself have gone over the precipice of social dissipation. I wish to see you standing, not only

on the heights of fame, but on the top round of the noblest morality."

"Why, Roget, how long is it since you became pious?" asked Minot, mockingly.

"I am not pious, — I profess nothing; but I believe in self-government and the nobility of human nature. I feel towards you as I would towards my own son if I had one, — and I warn you in the same way I would warn him. You have no parents, and, as I have often told you, if you show a disposition to do as you can do, right nobly, you will not be the loser. Minot, I have seen the woman to-day who would make you just the wife you need; gifted, sensible, and beautiful."

"And I have seen the woman who would make me just the wife I want," said the young man to himself, with a quick throb, as he thought of his momentary vision; but he did not speak.

"If you marry her, you shall have a fortune," added Roget, after an interval of silence. Minot's pulses quickened. A fortune without the trouble of laboring for it was a great temptation.

"Who is the paragon?" he asked, lightly.

Roget sighed as he answered, "You must have noticed her superiority; I refer to Miss Clement."

"O yes, clever, very clever, — and handsome

too; not exactly my style, however, but very nice girl indeed."

"A noble girl, in every sense of the word; a woman of good principles; accomplished, but far differently from the fashionable butterflies of the day; I have never seen her superior."

"Roget, why don't you marry her yourself?"

Roget flushed, and looked embarrassed. "Me marry her!" he said, abruptly; "I am old enough to be her father. No, no; such happiness is for you younger men, who have your way to make, and need such wives."

"I'll think of it," said Minot; "at any rate, we must be better acquainted."

"But no flirting," said Roget, seriously. "Indeed, I do not know how you could well flirt with such a woman. Men are quite transparent to her; she sees through their motives."

"It's a pity, Roget, you were not a younger man, though I don't think you need to despair as it is. How do you know but what she likes you after all?"

Roget shook his head, and changed the subject, as if it had grown painful to him. "Here are cigars," he said, handing them out as they arose from the table. "I never smoke, you know, and you cannot get wine here."

"You are an epitome of all the virtues,

Roget," said Minot, as he took one. "Suppose we stroll a little."

"I am ready," was the answer; and soon the two men left the house. A child stood at the bottom of the steps, grimmed and dirty. In one hand she held a dilapidated tamborine which she began to thump with energy, as the two men descended, looking up wistfully in the face of Roget.

"Poor little thing!" he said, pityingly. As he moved to the sidewalk, an old broken-winded organ began to dole forth the anvil chorus, in strains so wiry and pitiful, so utterly woe-begone, that Minot put his hands to his ears to shut out the din. Roget, however, gave the younger girl a quarter, at which she burst into tears, and almost instantaneously the old organ ceased its wheezing.

"What is the matter, child?" asked Roget, attracted by her grief.

"Father 's sick and mother is starving," sobbed the girl, the tears running from her wild, black eyes. Roget turned to the organ-grinder, a lad of perhaps sixteen. His coarse hair fell in long black waves beneath a slouched cap, and he shrank almost timidly from the notice bestowed upon him.

"Minot," said his friend, in a voice of sympathy, "there is trouble here, depend upon it."

And, nearing the young man's ear, he whispered, "That apparent boy is in reality a girl, dressed in her father's or brother's clothes."

"What a faculty you have for composition!" retorted Minot. "Do you know, I believe the whole thing is a humbug? You 've been generous to their tribe, and they impose upon you. They expect you will give them something handsome for this."

"No; I tell you there is real misery here. How painfully that girl-lad blushes! See, she is turning away; she suspects. I must see the end of this. Come, my child; we will go and call on your father and mother."

At this the organ-grinder darted a hasty glance at the little sister, — a glance in which shame and rebuke were plainly discernible.

"The gentlemen will not want to go to such a place," she said.

"O yes! we wish to see and relieve your poverty," said Roget. "I am something of a doctor, and can, perhaps, help your father."

The girl — or boy — said nothing, but strode on gloomily, her hat pulled down over her brows, dragging her clumsy boots with difficulty, yet sullen in all her degradation, through pride. At last they reached an alley in which it might be were dens full of thieves; it looked like it. If the poor place had ever known respectability,

it had forever forgotten its former station. Pools gangrened in the filthy gutters, garbage lay putrid in the gathered mud, children, who seemed the offspring of fiends, yelled in hideous discord. Fetid cellars sent up putrid scents; humanity had reached its lowest decadence, and seemed an utter failure. There were souls there, but they had lost all sense of their divinity and went groping about, blind and dumb. There were voices there, but all music had died out of them; there were hearts there, very few of them felt or gave, or knew what sympathy was. They had lost even that blessing among the very poor, charity for each other. From this description one may imagine the sights, sounds, and scents that filled the dilapidated building into which the little tamborine girl ushered Roget and Minot. And yet the room they entered was perfectly clean as far as they could see by the light from one wretched window. A few draggled, faded, trampled, artificial flowers were stuck in a broken cup, as if some latent sense of beauty, or longing after something that told of hills and flowers, lingered in the midst of abject wretchedness, still. A spirit-broken woman tottered from the one window. Her right hand supported her in her trembling journey, the left held the rags of what had once been a shawl over her bosom. Her short,

gasping breath was painful to hear, more painful still the hollow cough that seemed the knell of death. She was gaunt, thin, and unlovely, but her features bore the impress of former beauty. Poor soul! how her great eyes gleamed with an unnatural light as she saw strangers entering. What a wild, hopeless glance she cast forward and around, as if she would fain sweep away with that look the painful vestiges of their misery. But they came in, and she met them with something of womanliness in her voice and manner, enough to tell them that she had known better days. As their sight struggled with the dim outlines of things, they saw gradually a low, miserable bed in the corner, and what appeared to be a human being upon it. Yes, the great mass of hair, streaming in all directions, straggling over temples, bosom, and miserable bed, hiding almost every other vestige of humanity save those great lamps of eyes, with flame enough in them to burn out two or three ordinary lives, indicated broken and suffering manhood.

"What did they come for, Maggie?" asked the woman, sinking into a seat, and gasping with the exertion of speech.

"Because I cried, mother," said the child, innocently.

"Poor thing! if tears brought us relief, we 'd

be rich by this time. Gentlemen, there 's seats, such as they are; perhaps you have come to see my poor husband."

"Yes, to see if I could help him. What is this? a violin-box?" he asked, stumbling over it as it lay on the floor.

"It 's a body without a soul," said a voice from the bed. "*That* went for hunger. It cost fifty dollars, and we pawned it for five."

"My friend, we are musicians," said Roget, moving towards the bed.

"What! are you going to throw yourselves away, too, and bring poor hearts to beggary? Time was when I made a hundred dollars a night. Ah! but Satan is the master of we musicians. I 'm sorry you told me that. We 're all alike. Mozart himself got into excesses, and if Beethoven had n't gone deaf, so would he. I pity the man that plays the fiddle, — indeed I do. Where 's the good of all their applause? It 's the Devil's flattery. It leads you to bad and then worse. The habits get fastened, and good by to the man. That 's me, friends; I lay here dying, — a musician. If I 'd been a humble carpenter, my poor wife would not have been broken-hearted, and my little girl there, — my little, tender, gentle Nell, as soft and womanly a heart in her bosom as ever beat, would never have been obliged to put on her father's clothes

and live a lie, for the sake of such a good-for-nothing as I am."

Out in the far corner the girl he alluded to was sobbing bitterly.

"Don't, Nell! don't, don't!" he cried, almost shrieked, lifting himself gauntly upon one arm. "Hush, poor little heart! you sha'n't be troubled long. Don't think that I complain of the craft," he said, in a tenderer tone. "As long as they could keep sight of me, they helped me now and then; they stood by me, like men. It was throwing away their sympathy. I drank like a fish; I *would* drink. The craving became a disease, and what availed repentance? I only drank the deeper next time; perhaps had the delirium-tremens, and disgraced them all. No, no; they'd have been more than men to come down here with me; I never expected that. But somebody had to come; *they* never deserted me," and he pointed with his shrunk finger to the thin, shadowy wife, and the two cowering children.

He shook his head, looked forward as if through the dirty-begrimed walls into space, shook his head again, and with a sigh fell back helplessly on his pillow. Minot stood by, endeavoring to assume an air of easy composure; but he could not feign long. Now he took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, not as if ashamed of his

emotion, but manfully. Roget was thinking too deeply for tears.

"There 's no chance of his abusing anybody's confidence now," he said aside to Minot. "In his condition he needs the best of nourishment; I wish I could give him light and air as freely." Then he went towards the poor wreck of a wife and mother. "You shall not want," he said. "I will see to that while he lives." She made no reply, but, holding out her hand, seized his and kissed it. The smaller child was busy with her bright quarter; the eldest girl had turned towards the wall, her womanly and modest shame causing her to hide the face that the sun had burnt in her weary but love-light labor. In less than an hour that room seemed almost a paradise to the sick and hungry. Roget, with his accustomed liberality, had in one generous meal provided for days. A benevolent physician attended the sick man, but gave no hope. Brave Nell had once more a neat set of womanly garments, and there was joy instead of tears.

CHAPTER XIII.

A VISIT.

"BLESS me!" cried Mother May, "if there ain't my child!" and she stood at the door, holding a bundle of silk and lace and straw in her arms, almost carrying it into the room with her.

"O how nice it looks here!" cried Lucille, after she had kissed and hugged until her warm heart was satisfied. "O Mother May, how I have longed for you!"

"So you wanted to see the old woman again! Well, I 'm dreadful pleased to have you here. I dream of you nights, dear, and think of you days."

"And the water out there, it seems like an old friend, — a dear, bright old friend; but oh! there 's no friend like you, Mother May!" and, overcome by some sudden impulse, she threw herself into the arms of her old foster-mother.

"Why, what is it, darling? I do believe you 're crying?"

"Well, I am — I 'm so — so — I don't know, — homesick, I believe," sobbed Lucille.

"Why, child! ain't you happy there! my poor little cosset! How it trembles! There — there!" and she smoothed back the rippling hair, and kissed the white brow with a motherly touch.

"I don't know, — I suppose I 'm wicked," said Lucille, as soon as she could command her voice. "I thought I should be as happy as the day is long in that beautiful house; but I have waked up often, and thought if I could only run across your narrow entry, and just *look* into your room, it would make me happy. What is it, do you suppose?"

Mother May looked searchingly into her child's face. Not only had it grown older, but there was a shade of care under the eyes, over the brow, that alarmed her. The subtile light of thoughtless happiness, that had before glowed in her countenance, was gone. The warm-hearted, honest, outspeaking was gone, too, and her voice was hesitating and timid, — the old trustfulness seemed wanting. In some respects she had improved; the unartistic old lady could see that. Her dress was neater, and more neatly worn; there was a thought of care in the arrangement of colors, the matching of tints; a propriety never seen before. Yes, every way, this careless, pretty creature had changed; and yet, to Mother May, she was the same, for the heart beat still for her, true and tender.

"Take off your bonnet, Lucille, and sit down here; we 'll have a talk together."

"No, Mother May, I can't stop, for we 're to have a grand party to-night, and I promised to get back in time for Madeline to help me dress. You don't know Madeline; she 's a sweet, dear creature; but nobody loves me as you do," and the tears began to brim her eyes again. "You see I got so lonesome to-day that I thought I should go mad. Everybody had something to do but me, — even Madeline, who is an orphan, as I am, has an old black servant, who came to-day from Virginia, who pets her and kisses her. At least, she 's not quite black, and she was her nurse, so it must seem almost like a mother, and I felt as if I was in the way. Madeline saw it, and counselled me to go out; but I must be sure not to stay. I did n't dream of coming so far when I started; but I half ran, and here I am."

"Let me get the kettle on," said Mother May, always thoughtful on the practical things of life.

"O no, don't move, — I could n't eat or drink, — I only want to see you, and hear you talk, — now please sit right still"; and the maiden dragged her homely little cricket up to the feet of the smiling old matron, and seated herself.

"And so my little cosset is n't happy there.

If Loporta knew that, it would make him miserable."

"What! do you think so? O no; he don't care for me enough for that," and she sighed heavily.

"Care for you! I know he loves you as he would an own child; for what else, do you think — " She colored, bit her lip, and cast an uneasy look at Lucille, whose eager glance, as she waited for the rest, was pitiful.

"What are you going to say, Mother May, — what? tell me!"

"Nothing, child, except that he has always taken great pains with you, — great interest in you, and — "

"But why, — why has he taken pains with me, — why should he feel interest? I remember how he used to come every day, and then I thought he loved me. O, he would take me in his arms and kiss me, and lay my head on his bosom, — and I worshipped him. Why, don't you know, almost immediately after dinner, how I would go straight to the window and watch for him, and run wild, almost, when I saw him coming? And I never cared half so much for the nice things he brought me as to have him fondle me. O, dear, *dear* Loporta, — and now he is so changed!"

"Sakes alive, child! why — why, you would n't

have him take you on his knee and kiss you, — great, grown woman, almost, as you are!"

"Mother May, you know I would n't," exclaimed Lucille, indignantly. "It is n't the kissing I care for; but it seems as if he tried his best *not* to like me. Why, I tremble like a leaf when I hear his step: you may judge how he has changed. Mother May, when he used to come here, years ago, he always cried out, 'Where 's my little daughter?'"

Lucille ceased speaking; but she had crept closer, closer to the old woman, and now, with both hands on her wrinkled arms, her great eyes palpitating with the weight of their secret burden, their unspoken, eager, throbbing questioning, she waited for a reply.

"That was his way, nothing more; he meant nothing at all by it. Some men have a habit of calling every child they meet little daughter. He had no children, and he loved to fancy that you were his little girl."

"Had no children, — had *none*, — *never* had, you say?"

"Why, Lucille, how wild you are! I tell you, Loporta is a childless man."

"O, I hoped — I hoped —" half sobbed Lucille, and then she bowed her head on Mother May's knee till she could conquer her emotion. "He is a dear, glorious old man," she mur-

mured, lifting her now pale face; "he looks to me more like a saint, an angel, than a man. O, if I had been blessed with such a father! Mother May," she cried, with sudden desperateness, "where is my father?"

"Child, how can I tell? — dead, perhaps; and we know your mother is. There, there! ask no more questions!" she whispered, calming her own agitation, as she smoothed back the hair that had fallen forward, and laid in bright gleams of gold and brown over her knee; "it will all come right, dear: God watches for the sparrow's fall; he will care for you, and raise you up friends in father and mother stead. Just try to trust him, dear. Come, you have n't heard any of the news, — nor how Jem Bartol, who used to come here, and thought so much of you, is married."

"Married! Jem? now that *is* news!" said Lucille, drying her eyes, while a fresh wonder added new light to them. "Poor Jem! he called me his little wife; pray, who has he married?"

"A great, stout girl, who works at binding shoes, — very capable, I 'm told, and rather pretty."

"So Jem is married," mused Lucille again; "how strange it seems!"

"And poor Joe Lascelles is dead."

"Oh!" and Lucille looked up with a piteous, grieved look.

"Yes, he fell from the mast-head, almost opposite here. I saw a crowd running down there, and I thought of my old man; so nothing must do but I on with my bonnet, and went with the rest, — terribly frightened I was, too. It was n't May, to be sure, for there he stood, the first one I met, looking sorrowful enough; but he told me, — and soon I saw for myself. They brought him right by me, and it made my old heart ache to see his handsome face white and still. I hope he was prepared: he was n't a member, and it 's a solemn thing to be taken by surprise in that way."

"Poor Lascelles!" trembled on Lucille's pretty lip; "I used to like him."

"Yes, and he liked you, dear. I never shall forget the last time I saw him alive. He came past here, and the window was open, for it was sweeping-day. Well, Joe always had a word for me, so he stopped and leaned in on the window. His cheeks were red as two roses, and his eyes were like diamonds. He had beautiful, curling hair, too, I remember, for his hat was tipped to one side, jaunty like, and I laughed at him for it. 'When did you hear from little Lu?' he asked, in his pleasant voice."

"Oh! did he?" queried the girl, her eyes growing misty.

"Yes; and says he, 'The sun comes in here

cheery enough; but it is n't like the same sunshine that shone when she was here, aunty.' I could n't help thinking of it afterwards; dear me! it made me cry more than once. Poor fellow! pa used to hope that Joseph might marry you some time; but of course we don't think of such things now, since you 're better provided for, I hope."

"O Mother May, I don't know!" sighed Lucille, in a faint, hopeless voice. "Come, let me play you one tune on the dear old piano," and she hurried into the parlor.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMFORT.

That prim little "best room," with its striped carpet and wooden chairs! it was more beautiful to her at that moment than all Loporta's great, handsome house. Even the wooden ship on the mantel-piece was worth fifty of Loporta's glittering candelabras. She put aside the homely muslin curtains, opened the piano, and for a moment played listlessly. But her apathy fled as the sweet chords sounded with their olden witchery. They lulled her apprehensions; she forgot homesickness. It was like some tender human soul to her, speaking comfort in a language not known to the universal ear. Gradually the harmony took shape; and almost before she knew it she was singing a little German air, — a sweet, soft, beautiful melody, to which Mother May listened in breathless silence.

"Dear heart!" she cried, "if you ever do sing in public, which Heaven forbid! you 'll make your fortune, sure."

Lucille started up as the clock struck.

"I never thought it was so late," she cried. "What have I been thinking about?"

"Then you won't wait to see Father May?"

"No; give him my love; tell him I'll come again, on purpose to stay and see him. So good by. Give me a kiss, and forget my grumbling, won't you? I dare say I'm better off than I deserve to be."

"See, cosset, one moment; tell me how the madam treats you. She is kind, I hope?"

"She don't notice me at all, Mother May. I go and come, and she says nothing. She 's got an Angora cat, — a beautiful creature, that nobody can play with or look at but her. She bit me once, and, since, I don't know which I am most afraid of, her or her cat." This she said in a voice ludicrous in its halting between laughing and crying.

"Poor little pet! Lots of trouble!" crooned the good woman, in a comforting tone; and it cheered the sad little heart in a way that nothing else could. After all, she felt better for her hurried visit. The blue eyes of the dear old woman who had held her in her arms when a babe had touched her heart with their sunshine, and the world looked brighter to her outside. Then, as she hurried along, she saw some neighbors' faces at the windows, here and there, and smiled and nodded with gentle informality. They were humble folk all, but she remembered them with love. Turning a corner, she saw somebody com-

ing towards her whose step and face quickened her pulses. Very different was he from rough, honest Jem Bartol, who was married, and handsome, sturdy Joe Lascelles, who, alas! was dead; both of whom had professed such unbounded admiration for her pretty self, either of whom Father May would have deemed a good match for his darling. The easy, self-assured gesture, the quick, dainty tread, rich garments, and high-poised head spoke of thorough self-appreciation, or rather the quiet assurance of a gentleman. Minot, as he drew nearer, half paused; a quick, bright recognition fired his face; his eye scanned the little figure, as with a timid questioning; then gracefully and rapidly he carried his hand to the rim of his hat, lifted it, bowed, and passed on. As for Lucille, she was all in a flutter; quite uncertain whether she had returned the polite recognition or not; only very sure that her cheeks were scarlet, and her brain in a whirl. The tones of his voice, mingled with the organ strains, vibrated in her memory, evoked by his passing glance. She should see him to-night, hear him sing and play, speak to him perhaps, — she, the little, unknown girl, modest in the very ignorance of the gifts she possessed, should be near, be noticed by, the favored genius whose praise was the theme of every tongue. Like magic, this passing gleam had cured all her ills.

A thousand pretty fancies illumined the chambers of her heart; her sleeping vanity was stirred, — a personal vanity, triumphing in the possession of a fair face and figure, and only roused upon rare occasions. She thought with complacency upon the very charming dress which Madeline had prepared for her, and wondered if she should dare to display her petty gifts before this brilliant favorite of the hour. Absorbed in such thoughts, she had reached the house of Loporta before she was aware that she was in its vicinity. Madeline met her with a face dolefully elongated.

"My dear, where have you been?" was her first exclamation.

"To my old home; I could n't resist the temptation. Am I very late?"

"Why to be sure; we have had tea long ago; did you get yours?"

"No; but I don't care for any. O Madeline, I am so afraid of to-night!"

"Afraid, why, pray?"

"I am so unused to company, and everybody will be here."

"O no, not everybody," said Madeline, laughing.

"You know what I mean, — great singers and performers; O, I do so long and yet dread to see them!"

"Well, you can keep in a corner, if you wish, you know."

"Yes; but Loporta said he meant to draw me out to-night; what if he asks me to sing? I don't dare refuse, and I don't dare to sing; I 'm sure I should fail."

"O no, you would not; you would think how much depends upon it, and how kind he has been, and try your best."

"Perhaps so, but I doubt it," said Lucille, with a solemn shake of the head.

"You will dress in my room," said Madeline; "my good old Angy has carried everything there." They were passing down the hall. "See," said Madeline, throwing open a door, "is n't that beautiful?" The room was richly decorated, and three long tables groaned with luxuries for the supper. Madam Porta, under whose superintendence all this was managed, would do nothing by halves.

"I never saw anything so splendid in my life," said Lucille. She never had. Old Marmot passed them on the stairs, muttering something about funeral baked meats. Loporta came from the den, looking pale and anxious; only Madeline's aunt was in her glory, and determined that everything should go off in the best manner.

In Madeline's chamber stood old Angy, triumphant in a new red and black turban. On

the bed the soft, rich gauze robes lay transparent; all the appurtenances of the toilet were in readiness. Madeline would have arranged Lucille's hair herself, — her own was neatly dressed. Lucille had thought of a way which she imagined becoming. She had seen it in a picture, — the style of some celebrated singer whom she fancied she resembled.

"I 'll see to that," she said, and forthwith let down the beautiful tresses, that fell in a shower of gleams on her shoulders. She was very busy for a few moments; then she said exultantly, "There, how do you like that?"

Madeline was arranging some flowers; she looked up, looked very gravely at the bright young face. Lucille had thrown the soft, curling hair from the brow, giving it greater breadth and fulness; had rolled it like a coronet round the small, delicately poised head, and there was the living likeness of Loporta.

"It is better, I think, as you usually wear it; what made you alter it?"

"I 'll tell you. Once upon a time, — that means two or three years ago, — I saw a miniature of a beautiful woman. Mother May had it; you must know I very naughtily went to her private drawer, and found it. O, she was so beautiful! and this was the way she wore her hair. I said then, that when I grew older, if ever I sung,

I would fix mine just so. Don't think me vain because I fancy I look a very little like that miniature. Mother May only told me she was a public singer. I did hope she was my mother. Why, don't you like it? I think I never looked so well in my life!"

It was true that the sweet face seemed lovelier than ever, with the pink tinges on either cheek, and eyes brighter for the flush; yet Madeline still looked disapprovingly. Not for the world would she have told her why, but in her heart she felt a presentiment of coming trouble from that trifling alteration; and still she said, quietly, "I think you had better wear it as you always do, Lucille, if you value my opinion."

"O, I do!" said the girl, a little distressed; "but I want to wear it so."

"She looks pretty," said the mulatto, timidly.

"Please let me judge for myself this once," pleaded Lucille. "I like it, and it is my own hair."

Madeline smiled at her childish petulance, but still asserted that the old way was the best. In Lucille was a latent stubbornness that now declared itself; she acted like a child that feels ashamed of, but still persists in, its wilfulness. And when the gossamer robes were added, with their delicate, flowing outlines and soft, shimmering light, — the cincture with its wavy, breezy

ends, — Madeline thought she looked like some sweet picture, and rare as sweet.

"But that face!" she kept whispering to herself, with a strange pity at her heart; "that face!" and some way it made her dread to go down, — jarred upon her sense of coming pleasure. She dressed with a careful, anxious look, so that old Angy remarked it.

"'Pears to me you ain't going to enjoy yourself, child," she said, pitifully, thinking it was a grave's shadow that fell on the daughter of the mistress she had loved so well.

"Do I look very sad?" asked Madeline, smiling absently.

"Yes you do, — I don't like that look; you ought n't to mourn for her always; she 's happy in heaven, you know."

"O Angy, I 've got over mourning for that," said Madeline, glancing over at Lucille, who seemed never tired of surveying herself in the mirror, by covert glances, or any little excuse she could contrive. "I mean, I have learned to feel a sort of pleasure in the thought that she is free from all care and all sorrow, — only for my own loneliness I have felt very sad at times; but it has put new life in me to see you."

"I am sure I shall never forget her kindness — your aunt's — in letting me come. I knew I should live with my child again."

"There 's nobody in the den, now, I think," said Lucille, floating up towards Madeline. "I 'll practise a little before I put on my gloves, would n't you?"

"If I wanted to, yes," replied Madeline.

Lucille hurried away, thinking only of the handsome face she had met while coming from Mother May's. The den looked deserted; but in the farther corner sat poor crazed old Marmot, in his white sheet.

CHAPTER XV.

PAUPERS.

When Minot met Lucille he was on his way to the pawnbroker's. Not for a mission of his own, however. Jovial, easy as he was, spendthrift as he bade fair to become, he was far from being reduced to that necessity. It was on a very different errand. The pawnbroker's shop stood in a stifled alley, crowded with hopeless life. The very children's faces looked haggard and old, as if they had brought the memory of another and painful existence into the world with them; the men seemed to have come up from the deeps of some great bondage, and to be doomed to wear the marks of their struggles forever. Minot shrugged his shoulders more than once, forgetting, perhaps, that from amidst similar scenes and similar degradations his remarkable beauty and precocious genius had rescued him. There was the shop, vile in smell and appearance. A blear-eyed woman was just coming out, a bottle in her hand. A man stood at the next door, with a child's coffin under his arm. Through the broker's dirty window, the broker's vulgar face could be dimly seen. Minot lifted the latch, and

entered. He placed a five-dollar bill on the counter, and, after a few words, the broker brought out from an inner room a small and well-shaped violin, with the bow. These, under the direction of the young musician, he wrapped neatly in brown paper. Minot took the parcel and went out, wending his way still along the by-streets near the water, until he came to the house to which Roget and himself had followed the organ-grinder. Patiently and carefully he plodded up the dark staircase, hearing on all sides sounds of low revelry; but as he neared the particular room he had visited before, its death-like stillness struck him painfully. He knocked at the door; the youngest girl, with her apron at her eyes, opened it, and he entered. The supper stood on the table, untasted; a few coals brightened and snapped in the fireplace. A figure knelt at the bedside, — another stood near the window, her head bent low in her hands. One look at the ghastly, emaciated face lying back upon the pillow told the dread story, — the poor musician was death-struck. He lifted his hand feebly at the sound of Minot's entrance, and turned his dying head. The young man came forward, tearing the wraps from the violin, — and the glazing eyes glistened at sight of the familiar instrument.

"O, thank you, thank you!" he gasped, motioning to his wife to lift him, and taking the

violin in his half-palsied fingers. "I — I wonder if — if I — could — play just once — just — once — before — give me the bow. It is the last — the last time."

He was obeyed ; and Minot placed the instrument in position, while with the right, feeble hand the poor man drew a few faltering sounds.

"It is useless," he whispered, giving one hopeless glance towards Minot ; "I — I have done — I shall never — never — play again. Sell it for my wife ; it is good, it is valuable."

He sunk back, exhausted.

"Stay!" he faltered, as Minot essayed to place it aside ; "you, who are entering upon life, play to me who am leaving it. I have nothing to cheer me save a feeble hope in God's great mercy. I leave my family destitute ; I have been a curse instead of a blessing ; I have abused my gifts. Be warned by me, be warned! Yes, yes," he muttered, more feebly, "let me hear you play."

Minot seized the violin. The sacredness of the hour inspired him. Under his touch the instrument gave forth sobs and sighs ; the notes trembled, as with the emotion of unspoken anguish. The white lips of the dying man quivered ; his eyes were raised to heaven. Feebly he joined his hands as if in prayer ; more and more plaintive grew the rich tones, as if in beseechings of God's mercy. A tear, the last perhaps left in the failing fountain of life, gath-

ered, and rolled down the ashy cheek of the sufferer; the words "O Christ!" fell feebly from his tongue, and as the music grew more and more unearthly in its character, hands and jaw dropped, a wild cry from the miserable widow drowned the last faltering note, and the room was filled with one awful presence. Minot laid aside the instrument with reverence. He had never before seen a man die; and like a flash, as he stood there, the life of that miserable being, filled in with vivid colors, passed before him as in a panorama. First, the joyous child of song, as he himself was, feted and flattered, standing in the blaze of light and beauty, careless, happy, thinking only of the present hour, reckless of the future. Then the exultant bridegroom, leading a fair young girl to his luxurious home, thinking her too good for heaven's common air to breathe upon, and yet drinking and pledging her happiness in wine. Then the frolic, the revel, the drunken mirth, the hour of reckoning when the funds were gone, the easy passage to the gamester's palace, the mad joy of gain, the terrible agony of loss. At last here he was, a dead pauper, his pauper wife and pauper children weeping over the corpse that charity would hide to-morrow in a nameless grave.

The young man sighed as he thought, and a frightful apprehension almost sickened him. Should he ever come to this?

CHAPTER XVI.

A GREAT PARTY.

GREAT parties, at the best, are great bores; yet people love to be bored. At what expense do they get ready to make themselves uncomfortable! And the next day they can only rehearse the ill-doings and ill-fitting dresses of their neighbors. Under the name of pleasure, what would not be patronized!

The long parlor of Loporta's seemed a combination of flowers and flame. Lamps shot out pale fires everywhere, softened by the rich lustre of antique shades in India paper. Roses were strewn on mantel, bracket, and table; their fragrance weighed the atmosphere with sweets. Paintings hung in groups from the lofty ceiling, and leaned from the walls, so that the intense light below gave them the vividness and all but the action of life. Three tables, laid with massive marble, stood along the centre of the room. These were covered with books, drawings, and richly colored engravings.

Several young men stood round the piano-forte, near which all kinds of musical instruments were

grouped. It was upon such a scene as this that young Minot entered, arm in arm with his patron, Roget. The room was already nearly filled, and some one had just sang whose voice had created quite a sensation.

"Not so much for its quality as its power," said one of the critics, addressing Roget. "A splendid church voice, but not flexible enough for the concert-room. Ah! I wish you had heard Madam Porta sing in her best days. It was like sitting near the gates of paradise and listening to the angels."

Roget was looking for one face, Minot for another. They must be somewhere in the crowd, — Madeline and Lucille. Minot had determined to make himself agreeable to Madeline, while keeping an eye on Lucille. The fortune was a temptation, the golden favor easily attainable, and a lovely wife and happy home the grand result. But he did not act up to his resolve, for Roget no sooner saw Madeline among the moving mass of feminine finery, than he monopolized her. The girls were attainable only after a fatiguing search. Lucille kept timidly in the background, shadowed, as it were, by Madeline's presence. Minot thought he had never seen anything half so lovely; he hovered near, now and then addressing her in his nonsensical, high-flown way, secretly pleased at the blushes his attention called up.

"And how do you enjoy the crowd?" asked Roget, gazing with undisguised admiration upon his *beau ideal* of womanly excellence and beauty.

"But tolerably, I know so few here," replied Madeline. "I suppose there are many celebrities present."

"Yes, many," responded Roget, his eye wandering from point to point. The room was filled with a low humming, and an undercurrent of light laughter ran through the intervals. "Yes," he said again, a smile lighting up the sombreness of his face, "those men yonder, with slouched collars and banditti-looking locks, are young poets; don't you see the frenzy in their eyes, — especially in the one that squints?"

Madeline, laughing at his manner, followed his descriptions intently. There were men present with rough, uncut beards and shaggy faces, cur-like. There were meek men, pretending that they were not seen and did n't intend to be. There were familiar men, who greeted everybody with a slap on the shoulder, and a "Ha, my fine fellow!" There were men of sentiment, who looked languishingly under their eyebrows. There were men who followed painted pleasure, but were sought for because of the divinity of genius. A few very young students, mere boys, were present, who strutted, and

talked politics and discussed poetry with an air, as if they had outgrown their babyhood, which they had not. Among this throng Madam Porta, not yet old, and still beautiful, literally flashed, now giving a pretty piquant opinion about some book or celebrity, now retorting a *jeu d'esprit*, now launching forth some brilliant sarcasm, anon indulging in the liveliest sallies of repartee. She had hardly seen Madeline since she first came down, and had perhaps entirely forgotten the existence of Lucille. Loporta gazed proudly, yet mournfully, upon her. He seemed drawn towards her, and yet repulsed. When he spoke to her, admiration was in his eye, the deepest feeling in voice and manner. Towards him she was very polite, yet cold. Meantime Roget and Minot, Madeline and Lucille, were grouped together in one corner. Several rather indifferent singers, and one or two of great renown, had successively enlivened the evening. The company had gradually thinned out, and grouped themselves in anterooms, where some were playing cards, some chess. A very corpulent man was singing something from Lucia di Lammermoor; his face grew red with the almost frantic exertions he made to keep in tune.

"Poor fellow!" said Roget, as he watched his efforts; "high living has ruined him. A broken-down opera-singer," he added, turning to Made-

line; "liable to die at any moment from apoplexy; has had two attacks. Drinks dreadfully, and yet is a good fellow in the main. Are not all such men good fellows in the main? They only want a little salt to save them; what is it?"

"You know what I think," said Madeline, gravely. "But I can't imagine why most musicians live such loose lives. To me the art seems elevating and refining."

"And so it is, — none more so; and the gifted may well shudder in view of the good they throw from them with such careless hands. Perhaps you have noticed — I have — that most singers know very little but how to sing. They are never deep students in any of the sciences; and as music, heavenly as it is, and capable of becoming the instrument of great good, is after all mostly superficial, it follows that neither brain nor heart are rightly educated. I have thought it over frequently. I have noticed that people devoted to music seldom cared for any other study."

Madeline's mind reverted to Lucille.

"There 's Minot," continued Roget, "a young man of excellent parts, only unfortunately he has never till now applied himself to any other branch of knowledge. He is doing very well, though; devotes himself for so many hours a day to the languages, and I have hopes of him, high hopes.

He only wants some strong attachment to balance his mind, and give impulse to his higher efforts."

Roget looked so steadily at Madeline as he said this, that she blushed, and her eyes fell. Minot, whose glance was turned that way, noticed it, and grew suddenly abstracted. What was Roget saying? His ears itched to hear, and unconsciously he drew from Lucille, and nearer to Madeline. Could it be possible that he was pleading his cause? He reddened at the thought. Lucille was watching him curiously, and when she saw him move away, and, with only a careless half-bow to her, take the arm of Madeline within his own, and walk with her down the room, her heart suddenly sank as if it had been lead. Roget turned to her with some careless compliment on his lip, and still stood watching Minot and Madeline with his soul in his eyes. In fact, he had hardly looked at poor little Lucille, and only noticed her because she had been with Madeline. At that moment, when there was a lull, Madam Porta came in from a side-door, walking towards Roget.

"I am looking after Minot," she said, lightly, her voice still rich with music, as if the soul of song in departing had left its echo there.

"He walks out yonder," was Roget's reply.

At that moment Roget noticed an excessive pallor spread over the countenance of Madam

Porta. Following her glance, he saw that her eyes were riveted upon Lucille. Still she gazed, with that same chilled, stony demeanor, and Roget had twice said, "Madam," before she withdrew her glance, and at the same time drew a long, harsh breath. Lucille, meantime, seemed like one both terrified and fascinated. Her eyes were dilated, — her resemblance to Loporta more striking than ever. It flashed even upon Roget, who was a man of slow impulses and intuitions.

"O, Mr. Minot is yonder, I see," and Madam Porta turned away, her brow contracted as she drew another sharp breath. Roget moved nearer Lucille, out of whose fair cheeks the roses had suddenly blanched to a death-like whiteness.

"My child, are you ill?" he asked, a strange suspicion troubling him.

"If you please, I should like — O, here is Miss Clement."

Madeline stopped short, a look of grave concern in her beautiful eyes; Minot regarded Lucille with new and visible interest.

"Will you go to some other room with me?" whispered Lucille, evidently struggling with her feelings.

"Certainly"; and she excused herself to the gentlemen. "What is it?" she asked on the way, feeling Lucille's arm shake within her own.

"O, Madam Porta gave me such a frightful look, just now!"

"I told you not to wear your hair so,—I knew she would see it!" said Madeline, impetuously,—forgetting her usual caution. They had reached a room that led from the sitting-room in one of the wings of the house.

"Why, what do you mean, Madeline?" exclaimed Lucille with a look of terror, and grasping her arm; "what can you mean? See what? for Heaven's sake tell me!"

"No no,—I have nothing to tell; it was a suspicion of mine which I will not repeat. I was foolish to speak; I have distressed you instead of doing you good. Don't ask me again, Lucille; I have nothing to tell."

Lucille released her arm, and drew coldly away. "Very well," she replied, in a choking voice; "you may leave me,—I won't stay in this house any longer; I'll go back to Mother May."

"But Lucille, dear Lucille—"

"I don't want you to speak to me. I'll just sit here till the party is over, and then I'll go to bed,—and to-morrow I'll go to my old home." Her hopeless voice sent the tears to Madeline's eyes; what secret did this poor girl's life hold? What were the chapters of this book she was forbidden to read?

"Go back," said Lucille, petulantly, and turned away, more angry than grieved.

Madeline left her, reluctantly, and returned to the company. Roget stood as if he were waiting for her. His eye lighted at her entrance. Minot was promenading with a very showy young lady, who was evidently proud of his attention. As he passed Madeline, he glanced round somewhat disappointed, and Madeline only caught a question and an answer.

"Pray, Mr. Minot, how do you feel when you are singing so beautifully?"

"I only feel that I am — singing."

"What is the matter with your young friend?" asked Roget of Madeline.

"She is nervous, I believe, — quite unused to company."

"I should judge so; she is a pupil, I suppose."

"Yes, and has remarkable talents."

"I wonder Loporta does not show her off; he generally makes much of his scholars' fine points."

"He did intend that she should sing; perhaps she will."

"We are to have some grand instrumental music by and by, — after supper, I believe, — if I heard Loporta's programme aright."

"I am very glad of that."

"And you are down for the piano."

"If I can contribute anything to the general fund, I am willing," said Madeline, smiling.

"You are the strangest girl."

"Why so?" She looked up in grave surprise.

"You have no affected modesty. You know what you can do, and don't wait to be urged. Have you noticed that half the women in the room, and nearly all the men, gave in only after a siege of coaxing? Now they came here on purpose to sing, and they know, most of them, that they had rather show themselves off than listen to the most finished performance."

"You are ungenerous, uncharitable."

"Not at all; I am only a student of men and manners. It is very true that I find fault with almost everybody, and at times am ready to pronounce the world a great nest of hypocrisy; but when I find a woman like you, I am willing to retract a great deal. You must have had a singularly harmonious home."

Madeline had flushed at his praise; as he went on, felt a rising indignation at his assumption, and (as she judged, who knew the world so little) his uncharitableness; but at mention of her home her eyes grew moist. She lost sight of the brilliant lights, the merry voices, the sweet sounds, and only saw, in the midst of stalwart trees, the beloved Virginia parsonage, with its vines and its flowers. She sat again in the little room, while the curtains floated in and out, and held her father's hand. She saw, as in a flash of supernal

light, his sweet, spiritual face, with the earnest eyes smiling in her own. She stood on the weather-beaten portico, whose supports were rough-hewn oak-saplings, welcoming her mother as she tripped lightly up the steps. She followed the shadowy form of that beloved being as while womanhood came upon her, immortality was stamping the features so ethereal. All the sports, the studies, the quiet hours for chat and reading, the farewells, the tearful funerals, the graves, — all these she saw as scene after scene followed with lightning-like succession. She looked up. Roget's eyes were fastened upon her face, as if he were striving to read her very thoughts. He smiled.

"The home *was* harmonious!"

"I don't know whether there are few or many such homes as mine was, but I do know that happier, more gentle and loving hearts never beat, than those under our roof."

He sighed as he said: "It is to the lack of happy homes that much of the world's misery may be traced. In that, *I* have lost *everything*." He spoke with an almost bitter emphasis. Madeline would have replied, but instantly his mood changed. He placed his finger on his lip, as he said, "When Orpheus sings, the world enchanted hears."

Minot had taken his stand at the piano, and over his face was stealing that indescribable

expression, rapt, and almost prophetic, that distinguished him above all others, and that for the time made him seem a superior being. Strange to say, he had chosen a sacred air from one of Handel's oratorios, slow and grand. Madeline was sure that as he sang his voice faltered, and there were tears in his eyes, and his tones might have fanned into new fire the dying embers of a spent life, so wonderfully inspiring they were. Madeline felt herself tremble from head to foot, and did not wonder at the stories she had heard of people being wrought upon so powerfully at some of his concerts that they fainted away. Was it religious fervor or unconscious inspiration? If it might but be the former, he was safe for this world and the next; how could she refrain from offering a silent prayer for one so eminently exposed to the subtle agencies of the destroyer? Thinking thus led her mind to Lucille. Minot had ceased singing now, and was receiving congratulations. Quietly she slipped out of the room, and hurried forward, intent upon her errand. Madam Porta was busy in the supper-room adding the finishing touches to the table. On a small stand near, and under a bouquet of flowers, the splendid Angora, in a light wire-cage, was restlessly making the circuit of her narrow bounds, Madam Porta occasionally putting some dainty bit between the interstices.

At Madeline's step she turned, showing a face touched by care, and very far from being lighted with the pleasure pertaining to her success.

"Are they still enjoying themselves?" she asked.

"They seem to be," said Madeline.

"Don't Indiana look beautiful to-night?"

"Beautiful!" echoed her niece.

"Hateful as she is to others, she is true and good to me, and I love her better than anything else in this world," murmured Madam Porta, a passionate cadence in her voice, and then laughed a short, mocking laugh as she noticed Madeline's look of astonishment. "You had better go; you won't find me congenial company just now," she added, her voice thickening a little.

"I shall come back again," replied Madeline, trying to laugh off her chagrin, and she hurried on. The door leading to the little room that connected with the kitchen and dining-room was half open. Madeline, on hearing a familiar voice, could not refrain from looking in. Loporta stood over Lucille, whose posture was drooping. Her head leaned against his side, and his arm was passed caressingly around her head, his hand smoothing back the soft, curling tresses.

"My poor little girl!" he said, pityingly, "so you think I don't care anything about you, and I seem harsh and stern, do I? and you are

very unhappy! Well, I love you just as much as ever; and as for my coldness, as you think it, it is care, my child, weariness of the flesh and spirit. Poor Loporta is more to be pitied than poor Lucille, if you knew all. When I seem hard and unloving, remember that I oblige myself to be so, or am too much oppressed to show my natural feelings." He bent down as he spoke, and touched her forehead lightly with his lips. Then she looked up with such a childish trust, that Loporta bent over her again, again stroked her hair, and murmured, "Poor little girl! for *her* sake, how can I but love you very, very tenderly?"

Madeline moved back, stung to the quick, indignant, wondering. What to think she knew not: pity for her aunt overmastered even her feelings towards him. Must she learn to look with contempt upon that glorious white head, that had always seemed to her a shining crown? Was that innocent-seeming face, so fair that it had at times looked angelic, but a mask for a deformed and deceiving spirit? She called to mind his attitude, his expression, not less pure, but more parental. There was no guile in the look or the manner of the master. His touch seemed like that of a father, who pities that which he loves. She would not condemn him; but who was Lucille? Passing the supper-

room, she paused. All the servants were gone; nobody there but her aunt, who had assumed a position of extreme wretchedness (sitting beside the Angora, who was purring unheeded), her face buried in her hands. Obeying her impulse she went in, and sank on her knees at her aunt's feet. Her aunt, the sister of her beloved mother, was in sorrow; some dark woe threatened her peace; her heart went out to her in heavenly sympathy.

"Dear aunt!" she murmured.

Madam Porta started up with a wretched attempt at a laugh.

"I believe I am not well," she said. "Why, Maddy, you are on your knees!"

"It is a good position," whispered the young girl.

"Yes, when one can pray. I can't, — I gave up prayer long ago."

"But I can pray for you, aunt. You are troubled, — you need something better than any earthly help."

"O Madeline!" cried her aunt in a voice of pain, and stopped short with a sob.

"What shall I say to you? what can I do for you?" pleaded Madeline.

"Nothing, — nothing," cried Madam Porta; then, clasping her hands, she added, in tones of terrible earnestness, — "O, if God would only

give me back my voice, — my poor, lost voice! then I should know what to do."

"But aunt," implored Madeline.

"Hush! somebody is coming." Madam Porta sprang to her feet, moved the Angora's cage back violently, and then commenced to feed and pet the restless creature.

Thus in the house of festivity, where so many hearts beat to the touch of pleasure, where all seemed mirth and happiness, a strange romance was weaving for good or for ill, in the lives of the principal performers, — Master and Madam Loporta. Madeline had lifted herself hastily at sound of the coming footsteps. It was Loporta; and as he entered she hurried back into the parlor, dreading she knew not what.

The man wore a wild, strange look, — his face was freighted with agonized feeling.

"My dear," he said, very gently, coming forward. She turned a rigid face upon him.

"Are you ill, Marie?"

"Yes, — no; you had better go in to the guests, — supper is ready."

"One minute, Marie. I have something to tell you, — something I have hidden in my bosom for sixteen long years."

"You have chosen a strange time," she said, her eyes flashing, but her features preserving the same cold immobility of expression.

"I must tell you now, while I am wrought to the confession. To-morrow I may lock it up again and throw away the key, — for I am sensitive and proud, and it is like tearing out my heart-strings. Marie — "

"Loporta, I have no desire to hear you," she said, her voice and manner colder than ever.

"But Marie — "

"I will not hear," she cried, her voice fierce and low as when in her days of triumph, in the tempest and whirlwind of passion, she had portrayed despair or risen to the grand climax of revenge.

"My dear, you wrong me in not hearing me; you do me cruel wrong. Some day you will repent it." He was gone. Madam Porta stood listening to his retreating footsteps, her face full of anguish.

"If I could only love him less!" she cried, in a hoarse whisper, "I could hear anything, everything, patiently, — if I could only love him less, — it is *that* that kills me." She stood for one moment, quiet, gathering strength to smile, and seem what she was not. But when she had conquered, as she thought, the lines of care were still visible, the footprints of sorrow lined her face, — the quick laugh and the sparkling jest did not deceive all.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LIKENESS.

THE supper was a success. Some grumblers there were who chose to feel injured because there was no wine at table.

"That is the only drawback to Loporta's entertainments," said the fat man with the red face.

"He might at least have champagne," lisped a dandy, pulling at his moustache, and eying Madeline desperately.

"That is where Loporta and I agree exactly," said Roget to Madeline, who sat next to him,— "at such a feast as this no wine."

"A good example."

"True, but who follows it! That's where I set down your Christians and church folks as hypocrites. Two thirds of them would not dare to give a supper without wine; and yet hear their cant on temperance!"

"You are asserting what you cannot prove to be a fact," said Madeline, severely.

"How do you know?"

"Because you hate Christians, and go among them *never*, if possible."

Roget winced. "But I don't hate you."

"I feel complimented."

"Come, come," said Roget, "I see you can be severe; now confess you are not showing a right spirit."

"I shall confess no such thing: you attack my principles; I defend them."

"I did not attack *your* principles."

"You said that Christians and church folks were hypocrites. My father was a minister of the Gospel; my mother was a devoted Christian: I hope your death-bed may be as peaceful as theirs."

Roget was silent for a moment, — internally powerfully agitated. Presently he looked up, and even his firm lip trembled. "Miss Clement," he said, humbly, "I beg your pardon, and confess that I have acquired my prejudices from the enemies of Christianity. Do you forgive me for hurting your feelings?"

She looked up with a sweet, sad smile. "Most certainly I forgive you," she said, frankly. "Truth has been called a palace of many doors; I hope you are at the threshold of one of them."

He was silent again. At length he remarked, "This is strange talk for a party."

"Yes, I believe it is against the rules of fashion to be sensible," she remarked. "I notice the lady on my right is telling her friend how

many flounced dresses she has, and the one opposite is counting up the balls and parties she has attended this winter, and — "

"The lady on my right is commenting upon the failings of her neighbors," said Roget, gravely.

"I accept the reproof," responded Madeline, blushing; "it is a new occupation for me."

"Which shows how easily we are influenced for good or evil. But pray, where is your little lady-friend?"

"Lucille?" said Madeline, looking up and around; "she must be here, somewhere. O, there she is in the corner; Mr. Minot is talking with her; how beautiful they look together!"

Some sudden thought flashed upon Roget as he glanced over towards them. Again his eye rested on Madeline's sweet face, and his brow gloomed as he half turned away. Minot's thoughtless words occurred to him, — "Roget, why don't you marry her yourself?" Was this noble girl, with her superior faculties, a match for yonder harebrained fellow? And he — Roget — was not, after all, so very old, — only forty-five. He started; the years stood up in his brain like so many pale spectres, and laughed at him; forty-five, and she not yet — possibly, twenty. No; the blessing was not, could not be for him. She looked up to him as to a father, — an elder, if not a wiser, brother; such a

thought as love had not entered her mind. Blessed was the man who could touch the chords of that fine nature; it was not for him. Still her presence was growing necessary to him, — and Madam Porta had laughingly told him to win her if he could. He felt that she would be the fireside wife, the angel of home, neither too gay nor ever petulant; a being of harmonious development made superior by a hopeful belief in what he felt, when he allowed himself to judge coolly and calmly, the reality of a future, and the constant presence of God, manifested in the unseen, subtile influences that aided her at all times, and threw the charm of an exalted beauty over her features and manner. He was dimly conscious that she was bringing him back to a faith he had never hoped to find again. With this came mocking memories of the past. In the deep clefts of his own life he did not dare to look steadily. He scorned himself when he made the attempt, grew sick at heart, and faint with the desperate desire to warn the giddy beings about him, — to snatch Minot, the brilliant, beautiful creature, from the threatened future, a perverted life and haunting memory. To banish these spectres he resorted to almsgiving, — not having found the right way yet, — and stilled the clamor of his conscience by providing for the poor and needy.

All this flashed through his brain in the midst of gay laughter, the snapping of *bonbons*, the cracking of nuts, the merry little snatches of song now and then trolled out, while a fire of vivacious conversation ran from group to group.

"Pity to spoil this splendid pyramid," said a tall stripling, toppling the upper half of a cream over on his plate.

"Beauty vanishes with use," laughed his companion. "Speaking of that, what a faded creature Madam Cambia has grown. Poor thing! she puts on the paint, and, I suspect, thinks herself as handsome as ever. She must be monstrous old. She won't do for the public much longer; her voice is undeniably cracked, and she must soon settle down into a nonentity of an old woman. Pity, though; she has been a splendid singer."

Lucille was listening. Minot stood by her side.

"Do you see how the public requites us?" he asked, laughing.

"O, it must be dreadful, to a singer, to grow old then," she said, so earnestly that he laughed more heartily.

"Very unpleasant, certainly, that bugbear, age," he said; "yet Loporta manages to wear well."

"O, Loporta,—he is such a dear, good man! If all singers were like him!—but you know they are not."

"A terrible tribe, these professional performers," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "I expect you would not dare to speak to me if Loporta did not countenance me; but then we are not all so very dangerous."

"O, of course present company is always excepted," replied Lucille; and then she rattled on thoughtlessly. In the society of Minot, the gay, the sparkling, the irresistible, she forgot her sorrows, she could not be unhappy. It was only when he turned the conversation to Madeline that her heart grew heavy.

"Is she your cousin?" he asked.

"O no! Loporta's niece."

"I might have known; you do not look like her at all"; — adding, "She is a handsome girl."

Lucille took this as a disparagement to her own beauty. "I must be a fool," she thought, "to imagine that I am as attractive as she is. Everybody loves her, nobody cares for me"; and all the wretched thoughts trooped back again, — with them a vague sense of something lost, — a treasure she might never regain, except through another. It was the poor little fluttering heart that was wounded; but she struggled childishly against the acknowledgment, — pressing her quivering lips together till their scarlet faded out. Why should she think he cared for her?

Had he not walked, talked with Madeline, — Madeline, who was so much cleverer and better, and no doubt more beautiful than she? Poor little girl! she knew not that as yet the man was scarcely worthy of her lightest thought.

The twanging of strings and the vibratory touch of the bow gave token that more music was expected. Madam Porta remained till all the company had left the supper-room, her nerves strung up to their tightest tension with the part she was playing. The very depths of her nature had been probed to their uttermost by the care that was consuming her, — the slow, throbbing care, the stifled agony, — and for a moment she drooped, almost fell, as she leaned against the table that none had ventured too near, while the soft bright fur of the Angora, as she pressed against the bars, touched her burning face.

"Marie!" — it was Loporta again, timid, trembling, totally unlike himself, as he stood there pressing his palms together, — "let me tell you now, in a few words, — it will be better," — but he was stopped by her fierce, hoarse "No!" He sighed heavily, cast upon her a look of unutterable tenderness, — a regretful, sorrowful, hopeless glance, and left the room.

It was not long before she entered the brilliant parlor, and, with a gayety that was miserably

forced, joined in the merriment of the throng. There was a crowd round the piano, listening and eager for the novelty Loporta had prepared, — an original quintette, in which, as once before, Minot, Roget, Loporta, and Madeline joined, and a stranger took Marmot's place. At its close the usual raptures predominated, and Minot called for a song from Lucille. In vain Loporta shook his head, — urged her timidity and other reasons. "You promised she should sing, did he not, Roget? On your word as a gentleman and a scholar, which you assuredly are, I demand that you keep your sacred promise. Ought he not, Roget?"

"By all means; a little judicious coaxing will do the work."

They did not notice the weary, care-worn look of the master, — as who regards the host, in such a case? Loporta scanned the room; Lucille was searched up by Minot, and led triumphantly forward. She could not sing, — no, no; with a look of terror she begged to be excused, but Minot was inexorable. She appealed to Loporta as Minot seated her before the piano. He put his face down, to assure her, — those two faces! — how marvellously alike! At that moment there was a strange sound, — a low cry, a murmur, a rush. Madam Porta had fallen heavily to the floor in a fainting-fit. Loporta was like

a man beside himself; he gasped for breath as he saw her lying before him, insensible. Then he stooped, lifted her in his arms, his long white locks falling on and mingling with her loosened tresses; and, pressing through the throng, he carried her up-stairs to her room. There was no more merriment. A hush had fallen upon the house, and with stealthy footsteps the guests departed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MINOT AND LUCILLE.

On the day following the great party, Madeline and Lucille sat at the breakfast-table together, and Angy, in her trim calico gown and red turban, waited on them. Madam Porta was ill. Her husband had watched beside her all night, and his coffee was sent up to him. Lucille was pale and nervous, Madeline quiet and thoughtful.

"I suppose there must be no practice while she is sick," said Lucille, drearily.

Madeline shook her head.

"Did you hear the great organ last night?"

"Last night! why, we did n't go to bed till morning," said Madeline.

"I must have dreamed it, then; it seemed to shake the house."

Angy came in from the outer room. "Madam is worse," she said. "Master Porta has sent for a doctor. It is her head."

"I am going up into the den," exclaimed Lucille. "I can't stay here"; and she hurried from the room.

"It's a great pity missus was taken so," said

the old mulatto; "it sets the servants to talking. They all knows what it is in such a case, or thinks they does."

"You must n't listen to their gossip, Angy," said Madeline, alarmed.

"No, Miss; only they was talking 'bout how Master went to Italy, when he was a young man, an' brought home this little girl."

"Who, Lucille?" queried Madeline, startled.

"Yes, Miss; they says there 's a mystery about it which no one don't understand. She was a little baby then."

"And was that before he was married?"

"That 's what they says, Miss."

"Well, we won't talk about it, Angy; here comes Uncle Porta."

The man looked haggard and ghost-like. "She is asleep," he said, sorrowfully. "I fear she will be very ill; she has not seemed to recognize me all night."

"You know how used I am to sickness, uncle."

"And you will stay with her? I cannot bear to have a hired nurse," he said, plaintively, gratefully.

"O yes indeed! aunty and I will take the best of care of her, won't we?"

"'Deed we will, Miss; I thinks I 's a born nurse; colored people generally is, sir," and she courtesied to Loporta.

"Thank you; it takes a weight from my mind. I think she has been ill some time, don't you, Madeline? She has been excited, feverish." He gazed fixedly at her, as if dreading she would confirm his fears, or might know what he would fain keep from the eyes of the world.

"I believe her exertions in getting up the party have been too much for her," Madeline said, simply.

He seemed relieved. "Yes, that must be by far the greater cause. I am going up, now; you will come by and by."

"Yes, as soon as the doctor comes," Madeline said, cheerfully.

"Thank you"; and with another grateful look, he was gone.

Lucille had meantime wandered into the den. Marmot was there, as usual, just through with his weekly cleaning, for it was Saturday morning. He stood gazing at her, spell-bound, as she came in, his wits hazier than ever. It seemed as if his poor, shattered brain was losing what little light it had held before.

"You 're not a ghost, this morning, eh, Marmot?" she asked, laughing.

"Yes, I 'm always a ghost," he made reply; "only I can't wear my grave-clothes when I 'm at work, because they 're inconvenient. Do you

know I was sure there 'd be sickness or trouble here of some kind? I saw his brother sitting at the organ night before last, and he played that dirge that Loporta composed and Minot sings."

"Did he? How I wish I could play the organ," said Lucille, looking up to the high seat. "O, why can't I? — softly, you know; I don't think they could hear with the door shut."

"You can play if you wish; I'll blow for you," he said.

"O, you will! but how am I to get up there?"

"Here are steps," and he brought a small step-ladder, by which she mounted. He was as childish as she, and laughed to see her perched up so high. She had hardly touched the keys, frightened at the volume of sound that succeeded, before the door opened, and Roget entered, followed by Minot. Frightened and giddy, she turned to leap to the platform. Minot saw the effort, sprang up and caught her in his arms and brought her safely down.

"You see what a downfall aspiring genius sometimes has," he said, as he deposited her by the side of the instrument, where she stood trembling and blushing. "Where 's Loporta, Marmot?"

"With his sick wife, I expect," said the man, sullenly.

"Sick! is she very sick? No practice to-day then, I suppose, — of course not."

"And Miss Madeline, is she engaged?"

"O yes, Miss Madeline, *we* wish to see her particularly," added Minot, roguishly.

"Shall I call her?" asked Lucille, anxious to escape from the predicament into which she had so thoughtlessly placed herself.

"By no means," said Roget; "she is no doubt busy, and it would annoy her. Shall we go, Minot?"

"You can, if you wish; I will meet you in an hour," said the young man.

"But perhaps—"

"I'll be sure to meet you," said Minot, sturdily; "besides, I positively have some music to look over, that I had forgotten entirely."

Roget frowned, and was perplexed, but reluctantly moved away. It was plain that he did not like to leave Minot and Lucille together. His cherished plan was in danger.

"Miss Lucille, as Loporta is engaged, suppose I take the office of master for a while? I wish to hear you sing."

She looked up, piqued a little at his assumed peremptoriness. "But I don't wish to sing," she said; "I could n't sing before you."

"You will find me one of the most indulgent of critics," he persisted.

"She sings like an angel," said Marmot; "I 've heard *them* sing often. She sings as *she* used to."

"She, pray who?" queried Minot.

"I sha'n't tell you, — she died years ago; if she had lived, we should have been married. Do you want to know how she died?"

"Certainly; tell us all about it."

"Well, then, she was burnt to death. She saw singing in Lucia di Lammermoor, and her dress caught from the stage-lights. Poor Mildred! I expect it turned my head; I have n't been quite myself since."

"Poor fellow! that was full thirty years ago," whispered Minot. "It did turn his brain. Come, sing, sing just once. Do you know what I admire in Miss Madeline? she never makes excuses."

This allusion nerved Lucille wonderfully. "But she cannot sing as I can," she thought, her cheeks burning, "and I 'll do my best, just to show him." He stood transfixed while she warbled a simple little melody; after that he was silent, — she trembling.

"Do you know when my applause is the loudest?" he asked, while the tears of disappointment were filling her eyes.

She could only shake her head.

"It is when I am silent," he replied. "I could n't have spoken for worlds when you had finished that song. What a wonderful voice you have!"

Was not that praise enough for the most exacting? Lucille came out of her reserve, and sang again, and yet again. He sat and seemed never tired of listening to the sweet voice, or looking at the pretty, innocent face. Thus Loporta found them; he lounging lazily back in his chair, his soul in his eyes, she singing and playing with utter abandon, as if there were nobody by.

"Minot! Lucille!" he said, sternly.

The young man sprang to his feet. Lucille trembled as she saw the angry expression of his face.

"If you practise at all," he said to her, "go into the private music-room. In this place I always receive *gentlemen*."

Abashed, rebuked as she never had been before, Lucille hurried from the den. Minot turned upon him. "It was unnecessary to rebuke her," he said, hotly; "she was doing nothing wrong, unless it is a crime to sing at my request."

Loporta's eye met his, — and Minot read that on his face that shamed him for his unruly tongue.

"Mr. Minot, she is a poor girl and an orphan, staying with me under circumstances which warrant me in being particular, even to the verge of severity."

"I beg your pardon, Loporta," said the young

man, as he turned to leave the room; "I hope you do not think, however —" he blushed, and hesitated.

"I never imputed a wrong motive to you yet, Minot. You are thoughtless, but I believe honorable." He held out his hand, and Minot grasped it, then left the room. Loporta walked back and forth, at times sighing heavily, his hands folded behind him.

"Forty-seven years old to-day," he sighed; "and, by my heavy heart and my white hairs, twenty years older. Forty-seven, — poor, and in debt, — my wife unhappy and ill, my creditors clamorous. O wretched birthday! I have been been so weak and foolish! I have thrown away fortune, — I have been criminally silent over my poor Marie's expenditures, loving her so fondly that I could deny her nothing. At one time receiving hundreds, at others a few hardly earned dollars, I have barely succeeded in keeping the wolf from the door. Ruin stares me in the face. O my poor brother! O my poor family! my love for you has led me to the brink of despair." He leaned against the great organ, whose shadow fell benignly around him; he gazed yearningly up at the empty seat, as if to meet once more the dark, sensitive eyes and sweet smile of his twin-brother, whom he had loved to idolatry, whose death had made such a

chasm in his life; and a few bitter tears found their way down his cheeks, a heavy sob convulsed his bosom. He gazed about him as one would who was taking an eternal farewell, as he murmured: "I cannot live to see my family beggared, my home-ties broken asunder, my wife's affection gone from me forever; life would be a burden then, as already it has lost its value. Alas! in my distraction, I see only one door open to me, and that is death." He started at the impatient knock, announcing pupils, and nervously admitted them.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE SICK-ROOM.

MADELINE sat in the sick-chamber. Her aunt slept, under the influence of narcotics. The room was dark. Nothing could be heard but the short, sharp breathing, or the restless movement with which she threw her arms about in her troubled slumber. Seated in a low chair, within sight of the curtained bed, her head resting on her hand, the young girl reviewed the painful past. One would scarcely have thought, seeing her cheerful demeanor of late, the quiet happiness that marked her efforts, that she had been always the companion of misfortune and death. But so it was. Four little sisters had left her arms for the grave; father, mother, and dear friends had followed; yet she was not cast down, neither mourned as those without hope. Now, however, some painful thought saddened her face. On the little stand by her side laid an open Bible; but though her eyes wandered there occasionally, they did not rest upon it. Her heart was in Virginia, but it was there as a restless, disappointed wanderer, not as a joyful, con-

tented visitant. With many a wild throb of remorse she thought of her olden home, and of Harry Lodi. She wished, with a tremulous sinking of the spirit, that she had never left Virginia, and dared hardly confess to herself why. Harry Lodi had been her father's choice, — her schoolmate, playmate, and dearest friend. She had seen nothing of the world, nothing of men; she had looked upon him as her future husband; but now — O the appalling significance of that momentous now! She could have shed tears of blood, as the confession, from which she shrank, stood out clearly in her brain, — she did not love Harry Lodi, while the voice of Roget had power to thrill her as no other ever did. That was all, but it was humbling, — to her sensitive nature, almost agonizing. In vain she called him free-thinker, infidel, even atheist; in vain she turned from his image, in vain she sought by prayer to banish the thralling love: it had come like a flash of inspiration, without warning; it would not leave at her bidding or severest exorcism. She had taken upon herself, she said, with trembling and abasement, the task of converting this strong, dark mind from the error of his ways; she had exalted human means, and this was her punishment. But for her aunt's sudden illness she would leave the city, and go back to the friends who were waiting to receive

her with open arms. There she might forget — no, never forget, but repent, confess, and in time renew the vows she had so sinfully (as it seemed to her) broken. She would not see Roget, — not once while she yet remained; she would strive religiously to banish his presence from her heart, — that heart she had found so weak, so trust-betraying. While she was thinking thus, the door opened softly. Lucille stood there with a pleading look, and, at the simple nod with which Madeline encouraged her, came forward, throwing herself on the floor at her feet, and burying her face in Madeline's lap.

"Poor child!" thought Madeline, sorrowfully, "she too has her grievous troubles; so has my aunt and poor Loporta. We are not promised rest and peace in this world: it is the trial and the cross here, — the joy and the crown there. If they only knew, all of them, how this hope sweetens the bitterest trials!"

"What have you been doing, Lucille?" she asked, gently. The young girl only shook her head. Madeline moved her face enough to see that there were tears in her eyes. "Have you studied any to-day?"

"I don't want to study," was the whispered answer; "I only want to be happy, and I never am happy: they won't let me be, — Loporta or any of them." She looked up earnestly. "O

Miss Clement! if I were only qualified, I would go right out into the world; I would belong to nobody but myself. Nobody should have a right to criticise or to thwart me; I would be a singer, a great, glorious singer; and the world would praise me and follow me. There I should be happy, I know I should." Madeline shook her head, but Lucille repeated emphatically, "I know I should."

"Suppose you did go out into the world, and be ultimately a great singer, and suppose that your voice were suddenly taken from you, what then? What would become of all your beautiful visions, when you were no longer followed, courted, and flattered?"

"Then, I suppose, I should want to die: it 's a dreadful thing to have nobody care for you, to have nobody you can depend upon. Last night Loporta was so kind and good! and to-day he is changed and cross. Are you sure *she* is asleep?"

"Yes; what made him cross to you? he is never cross."

"I went into the den, and Mr. Minot came and wanted me to sing for him. So I sung, and Loporta came in, and he was angry at me."

"You are not careful, Lucille; you should never go there to practise, when you know he receives only gentlemen there."

"What harm was it?" queried Lucille, pettishly. "I did n't expect any one would come so early. I think it 's dreadful to have no one in the world you can call your own. You are not alone, for you have your aunt."

"But, Lucille," said Madeline gravely, "I should not be alone even if my aunt was taken from me."

"You mean that you are a Christian, and would feel that God is your friend; but I am not a Christian, and I don't think God cares anything about poor me," she said, mournfully.

"Suppose I prove to you that he does care a great deal." Lucille's dull face did not brighten, and she sighed heavily.

"In this little book," — Madeline laid her hand on the Bible, — "I read that God is the Father of the fatherless, the widow and orphan's God."

"If he cared anything about me, he would give me more happiness."

"No, that is not what you should say, dear Lucille, but, 'If *I* cared anything about *him*, I should be happier.'"

"Well, I suppose I should, but I don't," returned the girl, frankly. "I don't care for anything in this world or out of it but music."

"Then, Lucille, God will surely punish you, for you are, according to your own confession, an idolater."

"But how can I help it? I was born so. Good music makes my heart swell, and I feel as if I was floating through the air. Sad music makes me cry like a child, and think of graves and gloomy things. Then there is music that makes colors, and flashes; dazzles and blinds me; and some other in which I can see gardens of flowers, and smell all manner of beautiful perfumes, — and lovely faces come through soft white clouds, — and above all I often find myself standing, as it were, on a great throne, and singing to the whole world, while every bird and insect, the winds, the waters, the forests, join in the notes of the mighty orchestra. But if I am religious," she added after a moment of rapturous thought, "I shall never dare to sing songs, or listen to such music as I love."

"Then, Lucille, you have very wrong ideas of religion, if that is the way you feel. God don't want to keep you from loving music, and every beautiful gift he has given. He only asks you withal to love him so well that you would not do a wrong thing for the world, however much you are tempted; to remember him in the midst of all your pleasures and triumphs; above all, to thank him that he has enabled you to enjoy such glorious blessings, — for do not all these good things come from him?"

"I never thought of that," said Lucille slowly;

"it seems as if we were independent of God, — particularly musical people."

At this odd speech Madeline had much ado to keep from laughing.

"A great many of them live as if they were," she said, when she could command her voice. "It is because they have been wrongly educated, or subjected to dangerous influences. They go out in the world like a ship going to sea without ballast, and, inflated with conceit of themselves and their acquirements, grow top-heavy. Then they are generally followed by the worst people, those who are profligate and sensual, who flatter and cajole and dance attendance upon them, to carry out their own bad purposes; and not having the ballast of religion, this beautiful faith and trust in God, which is sufficient to shield from all temptations and preserve from all dangers, they fall, and are perhaps utterly lost."

"Poor Mr. Minot!" said Lucille, pitifully.

"Poor Lucille!" echoed Madeline.

"O, but I am not there yet, and no chance of it. I should like to feel as safe as you say, though: it must be very pleasant."

"Yes, it is very pleasant to have God for your friend; I want you to think of it."

"Particularly if you have neither father nor mother, and don't know who or what you are, — particularly if one has to be dependent on char-

ity, as I know I am. But you have made me feel afraid for poor Mr. Minot; he is everything noble and good and gifted; will they drag him down, as you say? What a wreck it would be!"

"I hope not. He has Roget to watch over him."

"But is Roget a Christian?"

Madeline blushed, and grew strangely confused. "No, I fear Roget is not a Christian; he is too good to be a Christian."

"What can you mean?" asked Lucille, in sudden surprise.

"Why, he says a man needs no guide but his own reason. I think he rejects Christianity utterly. Perhaps I judge him wrongly, but that is what he has led me to believe."

Madeline glanced up; to her surprise Madam Porta lifted herself in bed and looked wildly over to Lucille, repeating, as she shook head and finger, "Send her away; send her away; why has she come here to torment me?"

Lucille glided from the room like a ghost; Madeline went towards the bed and attempted to soothe her aunt.

"What am I here for? what am I here for?" cried Madam Porta, in a bewildered way, pressing her hand to her forehead.

"You were taken ill, last night, dear aunt," said Madeline, soothingly.

"Ill, ill! where is Loporta?"

"He has been here, watching with you till I came."

"Stay by me, will you?" and the sick woman clutched her hand; "don't leave me, don't let any one else come, not even Loporta. Send that girl away," she cried wildly, springing up.

"She has gone, dear aunt; you sha'n't be troubled, only keep as quiet as you can, and get some sleep."

"What, to repeat my dreams? No, no; you don't know what horrible dreams I have had; above all, don't let Loporta come: you understand?"

"I understand," said Madeline, softly; "everything shall be as you wish it. I am to stay with you, and take care of you."

"You understand, of course? I know you do," repeated Madam Porta, looking at her with eyes in which flamed a lurid light; "I say nothing against Loporta; he has been the kindest of husbands as he is the noblest of men; nobody shall say a word against him in my presence; let them dare!"

She was quiet a moment; then, springing from her pillow, she cried, "Is that girl here?" and Madeline could scarcely compose her, until she

thought of her Bible. Sitting down upon the side of the bed, and holding one of the burning hands in hers, she began reading in a low voice from the Sacred Scripture some of the precious sayings of Christ. Madam Porta listened; presently she said, softly, "My mother used to read that. Strange how the words come back to me! I can seem to see her sitting in her old chair, reading the Bible. Sometimes when I was singing, all at once it would flash upon me,—that old chair, my mother's pale face, and the verse she used to love: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' What is it about burdens?"

Madeline repeated it.

"Yes, that is it; and when I sang, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' I always thought of my mother and that text of Scripture; it appeared to me that I almost felt the rustling of her wings beside me," and she strove to sing a few bars, but failed. "Ah me! my voice is gone, and I never shall sing again! Maddy, dear, do take that string off my forehead."

Madeline had learned how to humor the delirious fancies of the sick, so she made pretence of loosening something from the throbbing brow, and then bathed it softly. As soon as she saw the wild eyes lighten and the move-

ments grow spasmodic, she took her little Bible, and the sick woman always listened, patiently as a child, until the fitful sleep came on again. So she watched beside her, her heart full of pity for Lucille, seeing in all things she gazed at the wild, scared glance with which the poor girl left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LETTER.

The snow lay deep on the streets, and hung in picturesque beauty from roof-top and post. It shrouded window-sills, ran carelessly up into door-ways, and stood there; covered railings with every form of beauty and symmetry, and draped the few trees with a natural lace-work, unequalled for delicacy and richness of design by any loom in the world. The air was frosty, the sun pale, the sky blue but misty; the poetry of the scene was evidently appreciated but by few of the purple individuals who were early out, on their way to business. At the walk-curb in front of Loporta's house stood the doctor's sleigh. The door was open; the doctor's man standing by, and that notable personage himself was just descending the steps that led from the entrance of the mansion. Loporta followed the doctor, wrapping his dressing-gown about him to ward off the cold. His white hair, blown by the wind far off his temples, gave him a more venerable appearance than that of the physician, who was ten years older.

"You are very certain, doctor, that the danger is all over, and that she will entirely recover."

"Yes, positive; just pet her up all you please now, she will bear a good deal. I left directions with that niece of yours, who, it strikes me, is a very superior little person. Take care of her, Loporta, she is getting thin. I don't know but what you owe the life of the madam more to her good nursing than my skill. She beats some of my best nurses out and out. And, Loporta, you 'd better take a blue pill yourself; you 're a little out of order, if my eyes don't deceive me. Good morning."

"Good morning, and God bless you!" said the musician, fervently. Then, as the sleigh drove off, he saw the postman turning the corner, and waited.

"A large mail this morning," said the man, handing him the letters.

Loporta, as he took them, hurried into the house. His hands trembled, sorting them out; he was the slave of debt. One of them startled him; it was broadly margined with black, and directed to Miss Madeline Clement. Which of her friends could she have lost, he wondered, as he looked at it blankly. Poor, pale, patient Madeline! what new trouble was in store for her? As for him, he expected nothing but trial. The

doom was coming, coldly, steadily. His creditors had waited long, had reproached him with extravagance, and only delayed their demands because a more terrible presence than theirs had hovered in the silent house, ready to take the thing of most value among all his possessions.

"I won't give it to her just yet," he thought. "I 'll wait awhile, till she gets strength, — perhaps towards noon, or evening. I hope it 's nothing that will distress her very much, poor child!" So he thrust the letter in his pocket, and strode along the hall. Some way it looked drearier than ever, that cold morning. The damp had penetrated and left a soil on the panelling. The housemaid, not quite through with her work, had placed broom and pan near a pile of dust. He entered the dining-room. Nobody but Angy was there, preparing breakfast for Indiana, who still ran restlessly round the bars of her cage, in which she had been kept since the night of the party. Her fleece had grown yellow through neglect, and hung knotted and tangled from her breast to her feet; she seemed really to have pined for her mistress.

"Poor puss!" said Loporta, putting his hand toward the cage; but she only snapped at him, and snarled, showing her milky teeth and sharpening her eyes as with hate.

"Don't like no one but madam," said the mulatto, quietly.

"And madam loves her," responded Loporta, a dreariness in his voice which did not escape her quick ears.

"Would n't take her food from me at first; but 'spect she thought she 'd have to, or starve; so she condescended to keep herself alive," said the mulatto, with a little laugh.

"How is the mistress?" she asked, as he moved to leave the room.

"Better, much better; we shall soon have her round again," he said, mildly.

"Poor man! it don't seem to set him up much," she muttered, as he closed the door.

Loporta went from there into the music-room, noticing that the door was ajar, and was surprised to see a half-kneeling figure near and bending over the music-rack. Lucille, for it was she, heard his footsteps, — looked up, and crimsoned, but did not attempt to hide the miniature she still held in her hand. He caught sight of it, and turned pale.

"Where did you get it, Lucille?" he asked, sternly.

"I found it in the music-rack at the very bottom, while hunting for an old song of mine."

"I remember now when I put it there," he said to himself, "and then forgot it." His glance wandered from the painted face to the anxious, half-frightened eyes gazing in his own.

He spoke quickly, — thickly, "Well, you might as well keep it"; then, turning half away, he added, "It is your mother," and left her. She looked after him with a strained glance, — held the picture to the light, — a glad, sweet surprise illumined her features. She kissed the beautiful face, and murmuring, "Mother, mother," pressed it to her bosom as passionately as if she held the living presence there.

Madeline in all these three dreary weeks had confined herself to the sick-chamber. She had kept the promise she had made to herself; and, though Roget had been often to the house, and had repeatedly inquired for her, she resolutely refused to see him. It was true, as the doctor said, that she was getting pale, but her arduous duties had little to do with that. A wild, sickening dread of the future possessed her, with which she religiously, and not always ineffectually fought. This new passion had for her a reality of which she had never dreamed. It was as unlike the quiet, steady feeling she had experienced for Harry Lodi as the great ocean in its immensity is unlike the shallow stream. Roget standing outside in her thought, — so strong, so confident, so manly, — the very ideal of which she had sometimes dared to dream, probing her thoughts, — not afraid of rebuking her if he saw good cause, never concealing his sentiments, or

altering them merely to fit them carefully to hers as most men do, — full of healthy hopes, notwithstanding the morbidness with which he viewed society, hating littleness and meanness, and loving the great, grand heart of nature, — willing to be convinced, though sceptical by constitution, — self-possessed, reticent, and always calm, even in dispute; — it was strange how, the harder she tried to forget, the more persistently his image stood before her. But she imagined herself in the path of right and duty, — and her spiritual sight saw angels coming down to help her in this great temptation, so that she said often during the day, often in the still watches of the night, "I shall conquer," — and a Christian, unselfish glow quickened the tired throbbing of her heart. This ceaseless watching by the sick did her good. For two days she had looked any moment for death, so utterly exhausted did nature seem in the motionless form beside her. But now there was hope. Her aunt slept sweetly and with the ease of a child. Loporta came up to take her place while she went down to breakfast; Angy stayed to put the room to rights. She was invaluable, her motions were so noiseless.

Lucille was at the table, and insisted on doing the honors. She was very gay, even to trifling; an invitation from Roget to a concert, at which

Minot was to sing and perform instrumentally, had set her spirits in the wildest play. She had thought of showing the miniature of her mother to Madeline; but, on reflection, she said to herself, "Not till Loporta tells me who she was, and everything about her." She felt a vague fear that all might not be right, and would not compromise even the dead semblance of her mother.

"Loporta says I may go to the concert with Roget," she said, chatting away; "he would trust any woman with him as quick as with his own brother. He likes Roget, don't he? thinks everything of him." Madeline vaguely wondered if that fresh pink and white face could ever captivate a man like Roget. It might be; she went so far as to hope so, though it gave her an ache in the heart.

"And Loporta says I deserve some little amusement, because I have been good, you know," and she laughed like a child.

"O dear!" she sighed as she spoke, "I 'm sure I 'm glad Madam Porta is getting better; but it won't be half so nice down here when she 's round, will it? — at least for me; for you know how she hates me," she added, seeing that Madeline looked displeased.

"O no! she don't hate you, she can't hate you, I know."

"But she does, and she always did. Don't you suppose I can tell? Never mind, Mr. Minot says I shall make a famous singer, and then I can take care of myself. I long for the time to come."

"I hope you may never be left to feel that there is no one to take care of you but yourself," said Madeline, who dreaded the future (though in a different way) no less for this impulsive creature than for herself.

"I know what you mean," retorted Lucille quickly; "but you 're not aware how good I 'm growing. I read my Bible every day, and I 'm sure I never so much as thought of it before."

"That is an improvement, certainly," said Madeline; "only practise its precepts, and I should ask no more of you. But where is this concert to be?"

"At F—— Hall; there 's to be a full band there, and some glorious singing. O, sha'n't I be transported to the fifth heaven! It will take all Roget's grave looks to keep me in order, for sometimes I sha'n't know where I am. Roget would ask you to go, I know, if he could only see you. Would you?"

"Not while Aunt Marie is so sick," said Madeline.

The day wore on till noon. Loporta was unusually busy, for his labors had increased,

and he had a pupil for nearly every hour. Madeline watched beside her aunt, who had not yet betrayed consciousness in words. At last she spoke.

"What time is it, Madeline?"

"Twelve, dear aunt; are you comfortable?"

"Quite, but very weak. I fainted last night, I believe; I think the heat overcame me. Did the guests leave soon after?"

"Dear aunt, is it possible that you do not know? are you unconscious of the fact that you have been sick for weeks since the party?"

"For weeks, Madeline! then I have been ill indeed, — for weeks!" she repeated.

"But you are much better now, — you will get up soon, with proper care."

"You are very kind and good to me, Madeline; where is Loporta? Did I see him this morning, or did I dream that he looked worn and sick?"

"You did not dream it, aunt; he is very anxious, though not sick, — anxious about you. Every minute he could spare he has spent at your bed-side."

"Dearest Lorenzo!" murmured the pale lips, — "dear, unselfish husband! — and I have been cruel."

"Don't distress yourself, aunt," said Madeline, seeing the tears fall. "You must be very quiet, or the doctor fears a relapse."

"I will be; but I may talk a little, — I must; it does not hurt me, and I will be quiet presently. Did they think I should die?"

"We did fear for your life for several days."

"I am so glad God has spared me. Do you know why? The last feeling of which I was conscious was that of hatred, — unmixed hatred. If I had gone into the other world with that stain on my soul, how could I have looked for mercy? I who felt neither mercy nor compassion. Madeline, I hope I shall be a Christian."

"It is my earnest wish, dear aunt."

"It has been mine, sometimes, particularly when I have read your mother's letters; but on this sick-bed, I feel the emptiness of worldly pleasure. I have lived for nothing else, Madeline, — for nothing else. First, praise and applause for my voice. God took that away from me; and then came in pride and love of luxury, — I was uncharitable, envious, unforgiving, and selfish."

"You are uncharitable now, aunt, to yourself," said Madeline, gravely; "you are getting flushed and nervous."

"Well, I will stop; but, Madeline, there is a change in me; I could forgive my worst enemy."

"Thank God for that!" said Madeline.

"I am so grateful for life! yes, I could forgive everything. Read to me; it seems but yesterday

you read those sweet words my mother loved: 'Come unto me.'" She lay quiet a moment, then turning her eyes to Madeline, and stretching out her feeble hand, she said, "How thankful I am that you ever came here! my sister left me a rich legacy in you." This sweet praise brought the grateful tears to Madeline's eyes, as she thought how unwillingly she came, sustained only by her mother's eager desire and dying command. Here was sufficient recompense, even for a lifetime of self-denial. Now she sat and read again the words of life: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," — read till sleep overpowered the eyelids of the sick woman, and she sank into a refreshing slumber. Madeline still sat, wrapped in wonder at this strange revolution, and half-inclined to believe herself the victim of an illusion. She had read of sudden lights and calms taking possession of the souls of enthusiastic devotees, but this seemed something miraculous, since her aunt, though a strict moralist, had rather laughed at religion, calling it fanaticism, fit only for timid age and ignorant childhood. Madeline's religion had never been merely a frigid recognition of doctrine, — love had been the ruling motive of her life in that as in her domestic character. She had known no variation, no change since her childhood, and no wonder this new life appeared

a resurrection. It was beautiful, however, such a divine manifestation of forgiveness, this taking on of spotless charity, — even if the world should touch her garments again to hinder her, it could not have the charm and the power of old. And now she hoped the great secret might be cleared up that had thrown its shadow over Loporta's happiness, and had nearly wrecked that of his wife. To the vague and unnatural stories she had heard she gave no credence, — she would not believe, until assured, that Loporta had ever been other than the just and perfect man he had seemed to her. Her reverie was broken by the entrance of the musician himself. He had never looked so pale and haggard as now. He smiled feebly, went forward to the bed, gazed tenderly on the sleeping figure there, then sank wearily back in the arm-chair, pressing both hands on his forehead.

"Does your head ache, uncle?" asked Madeline, in a low voice.

"Terribly; I 've worked like a dog to-day. If it would n't look like an imposition, I 'd ask you to do a little copying for me, — but you are all fagged out too."

"No, I am rested, and my head feels particularly clear, this morning. Don't scruple to ask me any little favor like that, please."

"My dear, good little niece! — how shall we

repay you for your kindness? Will you mind going into the den? There 's nobody there, — and everything is laid out on the desk. If I can only get a moment's rest!"

Madeline arose with alacrity and hurried into the den. The place was dim and dusty, for poor Marmot had grown more ghostly than ever during the period of Madam Porta's illness, and, taking advantage of Loporta's trouble and distraction, had neglected work, to sit in his sheet and dream. The young girl looped back the heavy curtains, regulated the enormous draught of the great stove, that was baking up everything near it, and, clearing a place in the midst of the papers, sat down to her work. So absorbed was she in her noting, that she did not hear the stealthy opening of the door, nor see that a shadow fell on the paper before her. It was Roget, standing a little way from her chair, — his arms folded, his deep eyes sparkling and glooming as they rested intently upon her. At last, unthinking, he sighed heavily. She turned, in the greatest confusion, half sprang from her seat, and for a moment trembled violently.

"My dear Miss Clement," he said, his voice almost broken with the quick, rapturous gust of feeling the sight of her face inspired, "you are a stranger."

"I am glad to meet you," she responded, letting her hand fall from his.

"And you are copying,—you are tired; let me note, and you may read for me." He had taken the pen from her fingers, with a kind of gentle authority which she could not resist or gainsay, and with burning cheeks she read while his pen ran more rapidly over the paper than ever it did in her fingers.

CHAPTER XXI.

SAD NEWS.

"THERE, that is done." He glanced shyly at her, a world of emotion in his eyes, — those wonderful eyes, that made his face more than beautiful. "Do you know?" and he turned abruptly round, "I have been hungering and thirsting for some of our old feasts of talk? I suspect, though, you are tired of my gloomy theories; but indeed, if it will be the least pleasure for you to know it, you have done me good. The fact is, I do not feel so utterly alone in the world."

"Have you found out yet what you are living for?" Madeline asked, in her old familiar manner, referring to some former disputation.

A quick glow, — a flash that made his face radiant, succeeded his eager answer: "I have found out what I should like to live for, — but — I — I am too great a coward to tell, — and if I did," — his voice had fallen, his countenance gloomed, — "perhaps you would despise me."

For a moment her heart answered his through her eyes; but the light faded out as quickly,

though every pulse beat faster with the joy of that instantaneous recognition. She fell back a step, averted her eyes, turned her attention to the scattered music, and gathered it in her hands, not daring to look that way, feeling the mournful steadiness of his glance; and not till he was drawing on his gloves did she move from the table, with a light laugh on her lip that belied the warring tenderness and struggle of her heart.

"I tried to see you yesterday," he said, in his usual voice, "but you were engaged. Would it be useless for me to ask you to go to the concert to-night? You have kept within doors so long, the air would do you good."

"And the singing and the music too," she thought, to say nothing of the dangerous delight of his company that caused her heart to bound. The impulse was stifled, however, the stern behest of duty paramount. Politely, almost coldly, she declined, and returned to the chamber and her charge, with a sinking of the spirit she had never felt before, and with that strong, masterful presence at her side. Loporta slept heavily, and his wife had not waked from her refreshing slumber.

Lucille made many demands upon her that afternoon. Loporta was to take his seat in the orchestra, the first time since the commence-

ment of his wife's illness. Madeline had adjusted the bow under Lucille's chin, and was surveying the effect of her attire, when Angy came in, wearing a look of concern.

"Master Loporta he sent this up to you, and say he get it in the mail," she said, timidly holding forth the black-edged letter.

Lucille uttered a little cry; Madeline felt the color forsake her cheeks; her heart seemed to stand still.

"I hope it is no bad news," said Lucille, reluctantly moving away at a summons from Angy. Slowly and with a trembling step Madeline went to her aunt's room. The lights were trimmed for the night, and gave but faint coloring to the outlines of the furniture; the coal-fire was replenished, the easy-chair drawn up beside the bed, as Loporta had left it. Madam Porta was lying very quiet, as if exhausted; she did not look up or speak as Madeline entered with her yet unexplained burden. The young girl sat down near one of the lights, and turned the letter over in her hand. What could it be! Vague misgivings as to her sin and its fitting punishment troubled her heart. She knew the handwriting; it was that of Mrs. Lodi, heavily lined, as if each touch had a dash of sorrow in it. What if—? she dared not whisper that terrible if, but her heart sank and grew cold in

her bosom. A miserable apprehension seized her, which she did not try to battle with or conquer; merely bent passively and fearfully under its weight. The fine face of Harry seemed gazing sorrowfully at her out of some dark mist. At length, with shudderings and sad misgivings, she broke the envelope. At the first few lines she shivered as one in an ague-fit, then a low, pained cry broke from her lips, and farther on her tears fell in a shower. It was the wail of a mother. Her only son was dead, and she a widow.

"He died and was buried before I, his wretched mother, could see him," she wrote, — "died away from home, with your name and mine on his lips. O Madeline, I am distracted! If I only had you here to comfort me. Comfort! — idle word: what hope or comfort is there for me this side the grave? My Harry, my noble boy, is gone! I thought I had known sorrow; — I had not read its alphabet. My soul is bowed to the dust; I cannot even see the hand of God in this affliction. He was my all; my widowed heart reposed in his strength; I have guided his steps from boyhood; and when I looked that he should guide me, my staff is broken. Madeline, I dare not imagine how you will feel when you receive this sad intelligence. You loved each other: he was to be your husband. O, the colors of that

sweet picture! how ruthlessly dashed out! I saw you sitting beside me, your hand in his; my years happy in their declining; sweet voices and tender cares surrounding me; — now I have only a grave-mound, and the long, black shadow of coming lonely years, sadder than the grave! I will tell you some other time of his last hours. He died of contagious fever, very suddenly, and they have placed him in a tomb. I shall have him laid beside his father. For two weeks I have been childless, and so prostrated by my sorrow and trouble that I could not write to you. My dear child, may God comfort you and me in this hour of sore distress! My heart prays, though my lips are dumb; but for that, I think life would be a burden too heavy to be borne."

And thus to the close, the stricken woman poured out her anguish, and Madeline read with wet eyes and an accusing conscience. He had died with her name on his lips, true to the last; and though she had not wronged him in word or deed, yet the consciousness of her alienation made her feel like a guilty thing. Until Lucille came home she sat there, broodingly, her memory busy with the dead, — torturing herself with fancies for which she had no real grounds, but to which her sensitive nature gave a reality that was almost frightful. Hearing footsteps, she arose at last, and put the letter out of sight, — her eyes hot, her fingers trembling.

"Madeline, love!" queried the thin voice from the bed, "what has made you so still? I supposed you were reading."

"And I thought you were asleep," said Madeline, bustling up, smoothing the pillows, adjusting the bed-clothes.

"No; you forget I have slept nearly all day. But, Madeline, your voice is altered; what is the matter?"

"I have had bad news, dear aunt; one of my Virginia friends is dead."

"Indeed! I am sorry for you," — and she pressed the hand of her niece tenderly, — "I am very sorry."

Madeline had kept her engagement secret, so that Madam Porta knew not how tender a wound she touched, as she went on asking questions which Madeline answered with trembling tones, and a sinking of the heart as new as it was terrible. Did he know? Could his spirit, freed from its earthly trammels, see what he had trusted, — upon how frail a reed he had leaned for all his hopes of earthly happiness? She shrank as from so terrible an inspection, and thought she never could be quite happy again. After attending to the invalid's little wants, she went into Lucille's chamber. The girl stood before her looking-glass, throwing her hair into fantastic shapes and humming. A bright color made her face very beautiful.

"O, I never was so happy in all my life!" she said, unheeding Madeline's care-worn expression. "Everybody was there, and such glorious music! — if I could only be in the midst of such scenes all the time!"

"You would soon tire of them."

"I don't believe I should, — and never if I sung myself. O, if you could have seen Mr. Minot! It pleased me so to hear the folks talk all round. How they did praise him! The ladies called him divine, and I 'm sure he sung like an angel, — but he acted queerly too."

"Queerly! what do you mean, Lucille?"

"Why, after the concert he came out and wanted to come home with me. He laughed so loud, too, and talked up in such a strange way to Roget, — and his face was flushed, — he kept turning and laughing, and insisting upon coming home with me. At last Roget took him aside, and said something to him that made him quite sober and silent. What do you suppose the matter was?"

Madeline could imagine that Minot, gay, impressible, talented, and flattered by the thoughtless parasites that hung about his path, had been tempted to indulge in wine, possibly to inebriation. She had gathered that his habits were not altogether stable, from what hints he had let fall when talking with her.

"But O, Roget is such a gentleman!" rattled Lucille; "though I should have liked better to have Mr. Minot come home with me, yet Roget was very kind and careful. But" — and here she gazed curiously at Madeline — "he did n't seem to enjoy the concert much. He was very silent and thoughtful, and made me laugh two or three times, calling me Miss Madeline."

Madeline caught her breath, and hastily turned away. Was it possible to help that quick upspringing of delight, even though the sad black-edged letter lay next her heart?

Lucille watched her furtively, then sat down on the side of the bed, saying, naively, "I guess they both like you a great deal better than they do me, — nobody in the world really loves me."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE QUARREL.

After Roget left Lucille, he retraced his steps, and went to the hotel, a handsome building next door to the hall in which the concert had been held. The reading-room was deserted, but afar off could be heard the clinking of glasses and shouts of boisterous merriment.

"What is going on?" asked Roget of a waiter.

"The singers next door give a supper to-night"; and, recognizing the questioner, he bowed. "It 's you, is it, Mr. Roget? Shall I lead the way to the room?"

"No, for I 'm not one of them," he responded; "but I have particular reasons for wishing to be near them. Is there an apartment adjoining?"

"O yes, sir, just the thing, — the door swings open into it, — you have only to loosen a hook, — there 's a window there, too, looks in on them."

"Very well, I wish to occupy it for a while; lead the way."

The waiter conducted him into a small anteroom, in which the sounds of revelry could be

distinctly heard. Here he sat, oppressed with gloomy forebodings. Minot had never before appeared as to-night, never been overcome with wine to such a degree. There was a rival singer who hated Minot, and would gladly ruin him. Roget had reason to know that he was present at the supper to-night, and that Minot was not in a fit state to control his temper or to take care of himself. Impatiently he sat and listened to the clinking of glasses. Then there was some hasty talking. A few indifferent songs were sung, others discussed. At the height of the revel, by opening the door a little, Roget could hear distinctly whatever passed. He saw that the friends of Stanhope, the rival singer, sat upon one side of the table, those of Minot on the other. Minot, flushed with success and wine, was in the wildest spirits. His laugh was the loudest, his shouts the maddest.

"Minot, how do you render that passage in the laughing duet where Meliore finds her lover?" asked one of the opposite party.

"How? just how I please!" said Minot, insolently.

"I 'll wager something that you got it wrong to-night," retorted Stanhope. "In fact, I think you often take liberties with the text."

"I am not responsible to you, whatever I do," cried Minot hotly, dimly conscious that a quarrel was to be forced upon him.

"He follows Loporta like a blind mouse. I 've heard the old fellow render that passage a hundred times, and he never did it right," said one of the opposite clique.

"Then you may be sure he did it better," exclaimed one of Minot's friends.

"Pshaw! he 's not such an oracle. When a man gets his name up, he can go to bed. Loporta married a great singer; I imagine that gave him his first start; he was obscure enough before that."

"He had been to Italy to study before that, at any rate," cried Minot.

"To study what?" queried the other, with an insulting laugh; "he brought home from Italy something besides his musical experience, did n't he, Hal?"

"Don't you dare to revive that old slander against Loporta!" cried Minot, springing up in a rage. "Remember, I am here to defend the absent."

There was coarse whispering between Loporta's enemies.

"So, so; that was the one with Roget to-night. Upon my word, our rich benefactor shows his benevolence in a curious manner."

"And his taste, too," responded another. "By Jove, she 's a regular little beauty, if she is a—" He gasped, blinded. Minot had thrown

the contents of his glass full in his face, and springing across the table, had his enemy by the throat.

A scene of terrible confusion ensued, and Roget had barely time to stride in and throw his powerful body between Minot and his assailant, sundering them as if they had been withes of straw. Minot looked up, choking with passion; but the calm, stern glance of Roget abashed him.

"I foresaw this," said the latter, in a tone meant for his ear. "Minot, I have warned you enough; by and by I shall leave you to yourself."

"Would you have me hear a lady insulted?" asked the young man, heating up a little under his shame.

"I would have you consider the company of men who would insult any woman beneath you," said Roget, sternly, and fixing a contemptuous glance on the person who had hazarded the coarse insinuation. "You are not fit to be out of your bed just now," he said, in a lower voice, going nearer to Minot. "To-morrow you will thank me for my interference."

The young man turned away sullenly; the friends of his rival laughed with insulting braggadocia, which set Minot's eyes glowing again. He had not, however, quite forgotten the gratitude he owed to one who had rescued him from a life of possible degradation, — who had been, in one,

father, friend, and benefactor. The fumes of the wine confused his brain still; he turned to his friends, however, bade them good night, and took the proffered arm of Roget, who, having hired a room in the hotel, saw Minot comfortably asleep, and remained up, watching him with a solicitude that made his face appear gloomy. After all his care, his high hopes, his dreams of a grateful heart, was this man to repay him in the basest coin? Must he believe that there was no gratitude, no honor in man?

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT MIDNIGHT.

At that same hour Loporta sat writing steadily in his den. He had come straight from the concert home, had not even gone to his wife's room. Page after page he threw off, catching each one up restlessly, glancing it over, then with a sigh laying it in order. One little lamp, topped by a fantastic shade, stood at his right hand; beyond a few feet of faint, sickly light, the old room stretched out, showing here and there a bright gleam that lapsed into dreary night. The darkling stretch of space that loomed up between him and the old organ might have seemed to a fanciful person thronged with faces that looked dimly forth from the thick shadow upon the weary and heart-broken man. Every now and then a heavy sigh sounded, sending a strange echo down the room. Sometimes he would stop the monotonous driving of the pen, and, leaning his head on his hand, indulge in sad reverie.

"It is our fate," he whispered once, as he sat thus, — "it *must* be; and why should I try to escape it? Two have died broken-hearted, — I

shall be the third. I cannot face ruin, — no — I cannot."

All this time, emerging slowly from his dark corner, the great sheet pinned closely over his shrunken shoulders, came Marmot, noislessly. The sheet, spread out fan-like, dragged after him like a broken wing. A solemn light shone in his dim eyes as he came nearer and nearer to the desk where the master sat, his face now hidden in his hands. He stood still, regarding him with a look of profound pity. The light, shooting out in rays, threw a vivid white over the middle of his body, giving a sort of splendor to the linen that hung in statuesque folds from his throat, while above that, his face in shadow, the black hair, streaked with gray, carelessly falling from his temples to mix with the thick beard, gave him an unearthly look, that might have startled stronger nerves than Loporta's. As it was he jumped at the touch upon his arm, gazed up for one brief instant, white with terror, then, seeing who it was, he said, impatiently, "What do you want with me, Marmot?"

"Master, I 'm come to warn you," said the man, solemnly.

"To warn me of what?" asked Loporta, letting his eyes fall, and trembling visibly.

"Master, — don't do it," said Marmot, in a slow, hollow whisper.

Loporta sank again upon his elbow, as if he had lost all strength. He breathed heavily.

"You are foolish, Marmot, — you don't know what you are saying," he exclaimed, still veiling his eyes.

"Sometimes, — sometimes," echoed the man, — "I know I can't think and talk right sometimes, — but, master, I am right *now!*"

There was a hush. The tick of the large clock in the outer hall could be heard. Loporta struggled with his emotions, struggled with his tears.

"Don't do it, master, — for the sake of everything good, don't do it."

Loporta looked up again. The poor, half-crazed servitor had fallen upon his knees, and with supplicating eyes still made a dumb beseeching. He strove again to shake off the numbness that was creeping over his faculties; it touched him to see that old gray face, so tender. What had sent him there with his warning at that time above all others?

"Marmot, get up," he said, when he could find his voice, "and tell me what you mean."

"I 've seen it coming, master, when I 've sat here alone with you. Do you think, kind as you have been to me, that I don't make your interests mine? I know I 'm not always right, — but God sent that trouble, — can I help it? And he

has given me a strange insight; sometimes I seem to see men's minds laid bare, but I say nothing. I tell you, I have seen it coming for a year; but let it come. Meet it like a man, good master. If it come in darkness, it will go in light, — old Marmot tells you that. You have heard how poor, afflicted men like me sometimes speak words of prophecy. I say, for your kindness to him and to *her*, God will bless you, — if only you don't do that — that dreadful thing." While he said this, old Marmot had been gradually rising from his knees, aiding himself by the legs of the tall desk, and Loporta had hidden his face again, and was crying silently, keeping in his grief as best he could, though it shook his whole frame. It was not often he shed tears, and when he did they came from the very deeps of his troubled breast. Marmot stood looking at him sorrowfully, slowly folding his singular covering about him, — making mysterious passes with his hands, shaking his head solemnly, and once or twice gazing up to the seat of the organ.

"You know, Master Loporta," he said, in a lower voice than before, "that to poor souls like me God gives strange gifts sometimes. Whenever I see *him* up there on the organ-seat, I know there is trouble coming. And so there is now, perhaps; but O master, through all, for God's sake don't do *that*. It has been in

your thought, I know it has; I could see it and feel it. No, no; wait God's time, whatever you must bear; it is better."

Loporta had grown calmer. Gradually he lifted himself from the desk, turned his eyes away from the light, and said, in a broken voice, "You may go, Marmot; you are very kind; I thank you for your warning. You need not fear; I shall do nothing rash." Marmot gave him one wistful glance, his lips moved, the vague, absent look that characterized his general expression came into his face, and, turning, he slowly retraced his steps down the long room. Loporta sat wearily back for a moment, then seized his pen, and began to write again, and not till the hall clock struck the hour of midnight did he cease his occupation. Madeline, in her aunt's room, could not sleep, but Angy, sitting in the great chair by the fire, her head thrown back and her hands crossed comfortably on her bosom, seemed disposed to let the hours wear themselves away without troubling herself about them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CONFESSION.

Roget and Minot came, arm in arm, from one of the city depots. They were just in from the country, where Roget had settled the family of the poor musician whose last hours had been brightened by his bounty. He had a little country-house of his own, where sometimes he spent a few months in the summer season. This place had been attended to by a gardener, who lived there rent-free. It was a humble square house, not of the *cottage ornée* style, but extremely plain and unpretentious. Several acres of good land were attached to the place, and supplied him the year round with vegetables of his own raising. In this comfortable home he had placed the poor consumptive woman and her children, feeling amply repaid by their gratitude, which was expressed by tears and silence rather than words. Since the night of the supper, Minot had been unusually quiet and submissive to the directions of his patron. He had not been near Loporta's, for his humiliation exaggerated the possible rudeness he had shown to Lucille on the evening in

question, and he was too much ashamed to meet her. This feeling Roget encouraged, thinking that to impress his mind with a deep sense of his fault would be the surest way of securing him from a similar temptation. The air was bracing, the snow hard-trodden, the sleigh-bells jubilant, and the fashionable thoroughfare thronged. Many a bright eye grew brighter as Roget, grave and stately, his tall figure erect, his head haughtily high, and Minot, carelessly elegant, and self-reliant in manner, his beautiful face glowing, nodded this way and that to friends and acquaintances; many a pretty lip was wreathed in smiles, as the gentlemen were recognized by strangers who had been entranced more than once by the spell of Minot's genius.

They passed from the great thoroughfare into one of the by-streets. At its further end loomed up the imposing front of a cathedral, gloomy and gray, yet grand in all its proportions. Here and there a solitary figure moved hastily by them, and entered with mien of devotion. The slow, thunderous tones of the great organ filled the air with tremulous fervor, pulsing along in great throbs of harmonious sound, that hushed the petty passions to silence, and filled the reverent soul with a calm like that of heaven's rest.

"Let us go in," said Roget, who had stood still as they drew in front of the edifice; "it is

some saint's day, I forget whose." Minot was nothing loth, — his passion for sweet sounds would have led him anywhere. They ascended the great flight of stone steps, they came opposite the font. Roget mechanically paused at the consecrated vessel, took off his hat, and deliberately crossed himself with the holy water. Minot stood back and gazed at him, surprise visible in every feature.

Roget started, and flushed a little under his dark skin. "I never told you," he said, "I was reared a Romanist; and though forms, and even creeds, have long ago lost their significance to me, still the power of habit is very strong."

They entered the house, which toward the chancel was densely packed, but there was still space enough and to spare. The organist was performing one of Weber's overtures, a matchless creation, embodying the wildest discords, but under their fierce, terrible wailing evoking a subtile strain of sweetness so exquisite, that one might think an angel had come down, pitying the struggles and the human anguish of those warring sounds, so typical of the world's longings and aspirations, to tell, with a song of perfect melody, how in heaven the triumph and the joy knew never the broken chord of sorrow or the tremulous voice of an anguished heart. The sun, yet high, lighted up transept

and nave, streamed from the painted windows, that seemed aglow as with a hundred vivid fires.

The twelve Apostles, in all the gorgeous coloring of the Venetian school, sent beams of glory, flashing and fading with the variable changes of the atmosphere, all down the long aisles, gilding the walls with a splendor as transient as indescribable. The altar lost little of this changing fire. A masterly crucifixion caught gleams of gold now on the sorrowful face, upraised in the agonies of dying nature, and now on the spiteful thorns that touched his flesh with sharp pain. The waxen shrines, the image of "Our Lady," the tall, ghostly candles whose flame burnt white, the surpliced boys with their swinging censers, the great organ, looming out from a more shadowed arch, the now slow, grave music, piercing up, up to the groined roof, the overpowering tones of the wonderful voice trembling in the *Deus Misereatur*, affected Minot powerfully. He leaned his face forward, covered with his hand, and was roused from the intensity of his emotions only by a cold, clammy touch that fell upon his disengaged hand. Starting, he glanced toward Roget. Why was it that singular gray blankness overspread his face? A contraction of the muscles gave him a helpless, overpowered look,

very foreign to his usual expression. Minot, bewildered, followed the direction of his troubled eyes. He saw only two priests who had just entered, one singularly tall, withered and angular, but under whose wiry brows the large Oriental eyes flashed with all the brilliancy of youth. It was a countenance that could never be forgotten, displaying certain characteristics of intellect and passion that burn themselves into the human countenance, and make their possessor like a volume to be read and criticised by all men. Roget had not lessened the grip on his hand; indeed he seemed to be totally unconscious of Minot's presence, and susceptible only to the influence of that strange, foreign-looking priest. At last, as Minot strove to withdraw himself from a grasp now becoming painful, Roget gave a long, gasping breath, turned his eye slowly on Minot, and with an effort whispered, "Do you see that priest? He is an Italian; I met him in Florence seventeen years ago to-day, — yes," he paused a moment, "strangely enough, this very day." After that, he said nothing, but followed the service with weary eyes and motions, often relieving an overburdened heart as it were with heavy, deep-drawn sighs. To Minot, who had never been in a Roman Catholic church before, the sight had all the charm of novelty. He soon ceased

to wonder at the emotion of his friend, and listened with rapt, exulting silence to the noble *Gloria in Excelsis* as it rang through the mighty space, the lofty *Te Deum*, and exultant *Gloria Patri*. His soul was full to the brim with the sensuous, wondrous charm of the rich tones and the finely modulated measure of the chanting, a service brought to perfection only in those great cathedral choirs where neither money nor time is spared in their attainment. And so the hour passed all too quickly, while Minot sat like one in a dream. The rich stains of purple and crimson had sunk quivering down to the polished moulding, lying like huge rolls of ore, gold and bronze and silver-metal, the last *Gloria* had been sung, the people arose to go, and still Roget sat listless.

"Are you intending to remain here?" asked Minot. "If so, do you know the organist, and could you possibly get the key of that organ? I'd rather play a voluntary than eat my dinner."

"I have decided to remain a few moments, if you have no objection to keep me company, and if you wish it I can get the key of the organ. Perhaps, however, you will gratify a whim of mine, — play priest, and hear my confession."

Minot stared at him with eyes wonder-opened. "What 's coming over you, Roget?" he asked; "are you crazy?"

"Perfectly sane, I assure you; only the sight of that man has driven my memory backwards, and brought on some old twinges of remorse. Perhaps you remember I had half a mind, one day, to tell you the story of my life."

"Certainly I do, and you suddenly thought better of it. Roget, let 's have it; I 'm sure it 's a romance."

"A sad romance, that I would to Heaven had never happened. Wait here; I 'll speak to the sexton, who knows me, and be back in a moment."

Minot lounged down the great aisle, floating out of one radiance into another, now enveloped in a soft, ruddy haze, now flashing ghastly green, anon a mingling crimson and blue folding him as in a rich transparent vesture. The church was very silent now, and growing dim. Presently the even footfall of Roget sounded, and he was beside his *protégé*.

"What a singular feeling comes over one in a church like this," said Minot, gazing slowly from end to end of the vast altar. "It is like being in a tomb, centuries old, among the embalmed dead. I never could be light-hearted in such a place. No wonder people confess their sins here," and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Better here than never to confess, and better to man than neither God nor man," said Roget, solemnly.

"What then, you are still a Catholic after all?"

"I was thinking of my own individual case, and of you," said Roget.

"O, I beg your pardon. What is that grating in the wall?"

"Only another sort of confessional," said Roget. "It puts me in mind, though, of stories I have heard. Centuries ago, there was a young girl in France, by name Agnes du Rochier, a beautiful creature, who from mistaken religious convictions formed the idea of being walled up alive within the church. Think of it; she was eighteen only. There were great rejoicings made, for she gave her princely fortune to the church, and only asked for bread and water. I can fancy those cruel Jesuits listening calmly to her bequests, — never making an effort to save her, poor young creature! Well, the Bishop of Paris, all his chaplains, and the canons of Notre-Dame, celebrated a pontifical mass on the occasion; — then the child went into her cell, and the masons filled the aperture, leaving only a loophole that she might hear the services of the church, and receive whatever the charitable would give her in the way of food."

"Just think of her there," cried Minot, with a strong shudder; "all her youth and beauty, all her gifts and graces, hidden under that aw-

ful, envious stone. Poor soul! how long did she stay there?"

"Till she was eighty," said Roget, briefly.

Minot groaned. "That will lay on my heart for a year; — ugh! come away from the grating, — it seems to be full of mocking, withered faces." He turned to the right. A confessional box stood open.

"We are alone," he said, laughing a little. "I might as well play father confessor," and he entered the box and seated himself. "It 's quite comfortable," he said, leaning his head against the opening at the side. A whisper startled him, it was Roget kneeling there.

"Don't do that," he said; "it makes me feel uncomfortable"; and he arose to go out, when Roget detained him.

"Just stay where you are, — an odd fancy has come over me. Remember, I was educated a Roman Catholic, — I have done this thing often in my boyish years and far into my manhood, — and it is no priest to whom I am talking."

Minot laughed nervously, perhaps at the oddity of his situation, seated there in the midst of shadows, — the man he had reverenced for years — who had been in character the embodiment of every virtue — on his knees at his side, as if waiting to expiate some terrible sin, and then renounce the world forever. A moment after,

however, checked by the silence of Roget, he sat gravely forward, saying, "I listen."

"My story is short, and without preface," said Roget, all traces of emotion banished from his voice. "At nineteen I left college in my native land (France, as you are aware), with the most brilliant prospects before me. My mother was dead, my father indulgent, but his great desire was that I should be a lawyer. I could not consent. My inclinations were variable, — I could fix upon nothing. At length a passion for the stage fired me. To be the delineator of our great dramatists was the height of my ambition. My father stormed, but I outweighed his arguments. By the time I had prepared myself for a *début*, my father died, leaving me a fortune. The fortune, and the license, — for my father had been some restraint upon me, wholesome as far as his influence went, — turned my head. I became an actor, and might have been successful had I been a poor man; but I lived luxuriously, I wasted prodigally. Every night I gave suppers at which it was thought gentlemanly to get drunk. I hired the most expensive lodgings, I denied myself nothing that I wished. I had no desire, no taste for low indulgences, however, — thank God for that! I kept myself free from every vice but that of intemperance, and even there I was never besotted. My unlimited ex-

travagance, my generosity to others, wasted my substance. I gave right and left, — I indorsed, — I set men up in business. Aladdin's riches would scarcely have withstood the constant drain that melted mine away like wax before the fire. At twenty I was fatherless, — at twenty-seven I was a beggar, as far as fortune was concerned, — and I had lost all relish for the stage. Meantime I had become somewhat of a musician, and practised desperately for the sake of a humble situation in some orchestra. At length, through the efforts of my friends, I obtained a place which gave me considerable means. I hoarded my earnings but to launch them out in imitation of my former lavishness, spend the last farthing, and work industriously for more. My services were valuable, and I followed the company from France to Italy, living a gay, careless life, indulging constantly in wine, — giving princely parties at some hotel for a night or two, then living on bread and water till I could replenish my purse. My companions knew not what to make of me; some called me odd, some mad, and others, because I kept myself aloof from their viler pleasures, hated, and were ready to do me an injury. It was at Milan that I first heard of Mademoiselle Flora. That was the only name she was known by, even to managers. She came unheralded, save by our leader, who managed to have some

great bills placarded. He had wonderful confidence in her. He only heard that she was a young American girl, and not till long afterwards did I know that she had abandoned her family for the purpose of becoming a public singer. Her father was a severe man, who thought indulgence in music a sin; strange to say, all his children inherited wonderful musical gifts, and the more he strove to repress them, the more they rebelled. That she had left her family was all she would tell me; she never even disclosed her real name. I shall not while life remains forget the effect of her first appearance upon me, — the slight girlish creature standing before that great audience, modest as a child, yet with a world of resolution in the sweet, spirited face. From that hour I loved her. Our acquaintance progressed rapidly; I wished to marry her, but had no fortune. I am ashamed to say that I yielded to the promptings of my pride, and urged her to consent to a secret marriage, representing to her that I was heir to an immense fortune, which would come to me on the death of an eccentric old uncle. The poor child listened to me, and we were married by that same priest who so strangely made his appearance to-day. Alas! as if to foreshadow our swift-coming desolation, her wedding-ring broke on her finger, that very night; but to me, in the full tide of my happiness, it

was no omen of sorrow. I laughed, placed the pieces in my vest-pocket, and wore them afterwards as an amulet. Minot, if I had been a temperate man, if the deadly poison of the wine-cup had not touched my brain, if pleasure had not been the ruling motive of my life, I should not be here on my knees, before Heaven and you, trembling with the misery of my remorse. A year passed away. Flora and I were madly happy; she never scrupled to spend the great sums she received nightly, — I never cared to save my own earnings. We managed as we thought to elude suspicion. Ah! my pure and noble wife! had I dreamed of what even my most intimate friends repeated among themselves! One day I saw in the Paris papers that my uncle was dead, and my presence required. At the time the news came I was in an eating-house, pledging some of my boon companions. Half crazy with joy, for I knew that now I was a rich man again, I posted off for Paris, without even bidding my wife adieu. I only wrote in my mad fashion, —

"'Dear little Flo: —

"'Give me joy, my fortune has come, and I 'm off after it. Will write you every week if I should happen to be detained by business.'

"This I enclosed in the newspaper containing

the intelligence, and directed to her lodgings. Pity me, Minot; that note, that paper, never reached her. It was intrusted by my friend to a drunken valet; he forgot to deliver, and then mislaid it. How many times I have rehearsed in imagination the anguish of that time, when she felt that I had deserted her, the patient waiting for some token of my remembrance, the proud agony with which she concealed her frightful misery! Oh! I have wept tears almost of blood, to think how her bright young life was clouded, and at last prematurely ended, by my unpardonable thoughtlessness. It was five months before I returned to Florence, where I had left her. During that time I had written many letters, not one of which had been answered. O, why did I repose in such blind security? I fancied that the letters had miscarried, that her engagements led her to other cities, that all was right, when all — O Heaven! — when all was lost! I returned, impatient to claim her as my wife; I met some of my friends, who counted upon a repetition of the old gayeties; they answered my inquiries with forced dolor: 'Had I not heard that my pretty *favorite Flora* was dead? — yes, dead and buried. Ah! I was a sad dog!'

"No wonder I lost my consciousness. When I came to, I called for my wife, my beautiful singing-bird. I showed the pieces of the broken

wedding-ring, I sent for the priest who had solemnized our marriage, I raved, I shrieked like a madman, I tore my hair out by handfuls, and ended by wearing myself into a brain fever. When I arose from that bed of sickness I was a mere wreck in body and mind. In due time I learned the sad news, and how much I had lost. My poor Flora gathered together her little means, and went into obscure lodgings. There my child, a girl, was born, and there its poor mother met her doom, hiding her grief to the last. How do I know but that she died believing the love, the marriage-ceremony, all false alike? To add to my misery, when I went to the poor lodgings, my child was gone. A foreign gentleman, the woman said, had come and found the poor thing was his sister. He had asked her a great many questions, and she was sure the poor man had thought she, my wife, was — I dare not say; you may imagine. He must have heard the worst version of the story from strangers. His sister had died the very morning he came to the lodgings, and to see his grief when he found he was '*tardi*,' — and the old creature gesticulated his sorrowful actions. He had gone, and taken the child, how should I ever know whither. Minot, in my despair, I have often said, I will believe in a God if he will restore me my child. From that hour I

practised austerity. I was, in every sense of the word, a man by myself. I needed no companions, I forswore the gay world. At last I came to America, — that was six years ago. My wife was an American; in some city of this great country I may find my child. I watch for her when no one thinks or dreams of my motive. If I appear peculiar, you have now the reason; if I hate, abhor the convivial cup, and the habits of society, you see why it is; if I warn you, it is because your type of character is like what mine was at your age, only you are more susceptible to homage than even I was. You see how long I have carried about a dead heart."

"My poor friend!" said Minot, in tones of the deepest commiseration.

"I believe my confession is ended," Roget responded, in a voice of relief. "Now let us go, for I must see that priest."

The great cathedral in many places loomed black with heavy shadows, but a few soft rays of light yet struck against the painted windows, — shining in blood-red and fiery yellows, while purple mists floated up the long aisles; but the roof and the choir, the corners and the galleries, were like blots of inky darkness. As they went down the long steps, somebody met them, and stopped to speak.

"Well, have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Loporta has gone by the board. His house — everything — is attached. I suppose they 'll hang out the auctioneer's flag to-morrow. Pity Loporta; always a good fellow. He indorsed for his brother ruinously before he died, and I suppose that has kept him behindhand; he has lived pretty fast, too."

Roget did not speak; he moved quickly on, left the key of the cathedral at the door of a small house not far off, and strode in the direction of the master's house, followed anxiously by Minot. The twilight was coming on rapidly; the streets were full of noisy life.

CHAPTER XXV.

SUSPICION.

Outwardly there was little change in the goings on at the master's. Lucille fretted and grew pale, to be sure, because Minot had absented himself so long. She was quite certain it was Madeline he liked, not her, — Madeline would not be seen by anybody; he had found that out, and so would n't come. Very well; she should not pine for the creature, — what did she care for him? And to show that she did n't care, she indulged herself in a long reverie, and a few tears, for variety's sake, at the close. Her lessons occupied much of her time: and it was well they did, for Madeline seldom left the room of Madam Porta. The invalid was rapidly recovering, however. She had been up nearly all day; now she reclined on a lounge, her rich dressing-gown folded carefully about her, her pale face and languid eyes investing her with that touching interest that pertains to a long and tedious getting up.

In Madeline's face there was a sweet but sad serenity. During the two weeks that had elapsed

since the reception of that sorrowful letter, she had given her whole heart to the duties before her, allowing herself little rest, and no relaxation. She mourned for Harry as for a tender brother, and learned to think of him without the self-accusation that had darkened so many heavy hours. At the same time she resolutely refused to see Roget.

"Maddy, dear, did I tell you my dream?" queried Madam Porta in a weak, sweet voice. Her niece, who had just lighted the gas, and was intently gazing at something, let her hand fall, turned, and signified that she had not.

"It was very curious. I thought my voice had come back. It seemed as if, in some great emergency, I knelt down and prayed that my voice might be restored, and God heard my prayer. I am not sure, Madeline, but it is really so; something tells me that I shall sing again."

"Do you care about it, much?" queried Madeline, anxiously.

"Only for this," she made reply, — "have you noticed your uncle, lately?"

"I — I am not sure that I quite know what you mean," faltered Madeline.

"Why, my dear, I thought no one could help; it can't be worriment about me that makes his features so sharp and his countenance so haggard. I 'm afraid we may have been living be-

yond our means, — I 'm really afraid, dear, that my husband is embarrassed. If I find that my suspicions are correct, O what joy to go out into the world again, for his sake, — to aid him in his struggles! His position is an unhappy one in many respects. He has no brother to go to, no sister to console him, — only poor me, his wife, and I have been in some respects only a broken reed, for I have dared — to suspect —" She caught her breath, looked pitifully up in Madeline's face, then added quickly, " But I have been very unworthy of him, — no earthly power could shake my faith in him now. If he has any secret which he keeps from me, it is an honorable one."

" Did he never have a sister ? " asked Madeline, not knowing what she asked ; the question being prompted by a mere desire to say something.

" Not that I know of," replied Madam Porta ; " of course not, or he would have told me. He did not marry till late, though, — he might have had a sister who died in infancy ; but he never alludes to his family. His brother's mournful death has made him very sensitive on that point. What is that, Maddy, dear, — a miniature ? "

Madeline flushed to the roots of her hair as she turned and saw that Madam Porta had caught sight of the likeness she was stealthily reviewing.

"It is a miniature, is it not?" she asked, in quicker tones. "Some lover, eh?"

"O no, no," Madeline reiterated, not knowing what she said; "it is no lover."

"Who then? it can't be your mother."

"No; it is nobody belonging to me," said Madeline, nervously.

"Won't you let me see it! It 's old-fashioned, and I do like to look at those old-fashioned pictures." What could the poor girl do? She was not quick at invention; she knew that there was mystery connected with Lucille's fortunes, and that as yet Madam Porta did not seem easy or satisfied in her presence. She was roused by her aunt's quick, impetuous exclamation, "What can it be that makes you so unwilling to let me see it?" Madeline held out her hand, mechanically; Madam Porta looked long at the young, childish face.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Lucille says it is her mother."

"Ah!" the voice grew husky; "where in the world did the child get it? do you know?" For her life Madeline would not equivocate.

"My uncle gave it to her."

"Lately?"

"Since she has been here."

"Then that rumor was true," she cried in a pained voice, that was yet below her breath.

"Did Loporta *tell* her it was her mother?" queried Madam Porta, frigidly.

"I believe he did, aunt."

"Go ask Loporta to come here," said her aunt, in a tone of command, lifting herself in a sitting position, her eyes glittering. Madeline trembled, but arose and went towards the door.

"Stop!" it was her aunt's voice, harsh and grating. Madeline turned.

"You need not go," she said, coldly; "as for the miniature, I want it awhile."

Like lightning the resolution to seek Loporta had flashed through her mind. She had not walked yet, even to the threshold, but she would gather up her strength, — yes, she felt as strong as a giant now, — send Madeline away on some pretext or other, and then confront him with this picture. Madeline slowly retraced her steps. She sank down by the side of the couch on which Madam Porta had thrown herself again. More than ever her heart swelled with love and pity for the woman who in her weakness looked so much like her beautiful, angel mother.

"Aunt," she said softly, "do you know what you said but a moment ago? Pardon me for speaking of it, but do you remember?" Madam Porta closed her eyes, and shut her lips firmly together. "You said no earthly power could

shake your faith in him," pleaded the girl in her gentle, soothing tones.

"And have I said that my faith *is* shaken? How absurd of you! You thought, perhaps, I was jealous or angry; you are mistaken, Madeline."

No, Madeline was not mistaken; she heard the passionate tremor in her voice, she saw how the whole weak frame was shaken. But in this mood her presence was not needed. She took her little Bible, not ostentatiously, but because it had become a habit to do so on all occasions of trouble, — a habit fostered in her childhood, — and sat down quietly. The little action was not unperceived. Madam Porta's cheek flushed, she bit her pale lip, but her resolution, though softened, was unaltered.

CHAPTER XXVI.

VINDICATION.

It was quite dusk when Roget and Minot came within sight of the house of the master. It might have been but a fancy of Roget, but it seemed to him that it was not lighted, and wore an unusually cheerless aspect. Applying his own key, for Loporta's most intimate friends had access to the house at any reasonable hour, the two men entered. All was as usual. A servant crossed the hall, never looking up as they passed her. The staircase was dimly lighted, and they pressed their way up into the entry above. Lucille, looking like a beautiful apparition, stood near the door, through which she had just come, — her eyes lighted at sight of Minot, and Roget, as he glanced in her face, thought only of Loporta; the likeness was extraordinary.

Minot held out his hand, bowing with an embarrassment which contrasted with his usually dashing, smiling effrontery. For a moment Roget looked anxiously for Madeline, stopped to question Lucille about Loporta in hopes that she would come out. It was at that moment her

arrested her, and she turned away from the door. Lucille knew nothing about the master, supposed he was in the den, as it was one of his off nights. He had not yet been down to supper, she said; and, all in a flutter at the interview, she stood aside to let them pass, catching one shy glance from Minot. Roget bent his steps directly towards the den. A hint of cigar-smoke came through the keyhole. He lifted the latch, — the room was in a cloud. Through the thick haze he saw the flame of two candles, the bright gleam of the brass organ-pipes, and a clumsy-looking man sitting near by, his heels resting upon the old desk. He was reading the evening paper.

"My friend," said Roget, "where is Mr. Porta?"

The man answered roughly, to the intent that he did n't know nor care.

"Faugh!" ejaculated Minot, "what vile tobacco!"

"All in use," replied the man, deliberately knocking off the ashes.

"Loporta don't make a smoking-saloon of his music-room," said Roget, disgusted.

"'T ain't his room, if it 's all the same to you," replied the man, coarsely; "I 'm in for keeper."

"Well, as I have a little private business to transact, which is of great importance, perhaps

you would n't object to taking yourself and your tobacco into some room down-stairs."

"Perhaps I would," answered the man, with a growl.

"But for a consideration," and Roget drew a dollar from his pocket.

"O, now you asks like a gentleman, to be sure I 'll go," said the fellow, taking the money; and, springing from his seat, he opened the door and vanished.

Roget threw the window up; the fresh air slowly purified the atmosphere. The desk, as usual, was in a state of great confusion; papers were tumbled about here and there, — papers lay upon the piano-forte, — were scattered over the floor. Roget went over to Marmot's corner; the poor fellow sat there, as still as a corpse, in his high-backed chair, covered closely in his sheet, only the top of his head visible. Roget touched him on the shoulder. He started, opened his eyes, and fixed an unwinking stare upon the faces before him.

"Where 's Loporta, Marmot?"

"Is it you, Roget? Beg him not to do it; say everything against it. Will you entreat him?"

"What do you mean, Marmot? I say I want your master, Loporta."

The man pulled a string near him. Presently the door leading from the back staircase opened,

and Loporta's face, haggard almost to ghastliness, looked in.

"Ha, my friend! I 've been away a week. Just come back," said Roget, forcing a laugh as he held forth his hand.

"O, it 's you!" and he peered between them to the opposite side of the room.

"I 've sent him out," said Roget.

"You have? I 'm glad. You see my nerves are shaken. You heard, I suppose —" and his eyes grew hard like stone in their unflinching glare.

"Heard all about it, and am come to be your friend," said Roget, manfully, shaking his hand which he still held, and keeping the tears out of his own eyes by a strong effort.

"O Minot, I did n't see you; I believe I 'm getting old and forgetful. Take chairs. How are you this evening? What 's up, another concert, Minot?"

All this he said with such absolute weariness of voice and manner, dropping into a chair as he stopped, as if his strength were all gone, that Roget pressed his lips together like a vice.

"You 're not well, Loporta."

"No, not exactly; the fact is I 've been up two nights, sorting my papers, — a hard set of papers to bring right," and he shook his head hopelessly.

"I guess we 'll bring them right," said Roget. "Loporta, I 'm going to get you through."

"No, no!" cried the master, with energy. "Don't speak of it; you 've no idea of the load I have carried for years. Let it all go; I 'll be a free man once more, please God! No more help, — no more loans, Roget; not if I go to the poor-house!" He sank back shuddering.

"But madam, how does she —"

The old man thrust forward both hands with a quick, sharp cry, and then laughed almost hysterically while the bitter tears were crowding in his eyes.

"I shall — I shall let her think, — I — shall — let — her — think," he added more slowly, as if gathering the full force of the idea, "that I have been — anything, — all she pleases to imagine, — careless, — reckless of her comfort, — everything. She has friends, — I have none," his head sank upon his breast.

"Don't say so, Loporta." Roget's voice trembled, Minot turned away — *to wink hard.* "I tell you, man, I have money enough, and I *will* pull you through this tight place."

"No more obligations, Roget," muttered Loporta, huskily; "not another one; you don't know how deep I 'm in; even the dear old organ will have to go," — and he turned his eyes dimly towards its great pipes, every one of which seemed to glimmer sorrowfully as he spoke.

"But I 'll make it a gift; I 'll do it, man, as sure as you are born. A pretty Christian you are, to sit there and refuse help, when Providence has sent it just in the nick of time."

"It 's very odd to hear *you* talk of Providence," said Loporta, a queer mixture of defiance and humor struggling in his voice.

"I know I 'm not much of a Christian," Roget answered, grimly, "but I 'm going to act as if I was, at any rate."

Loporta stood up, looking eagerly towards the door; the latch was stirred, he turned even paler. The door was thrown open widely; two lawyers entered, talking with loud voices to a stout, tall man, with gray hair and forbidding eyebrows, who followed them sturdily, defiance in every step.

"O hush! hush! — my wife!" pleaded Loporta. Roget went forward, spoke in a half whisper, and the men softened their tones. Roget moved drearily towards the great desk, round which the men had seated themselves.

"Well, I suppose there 's nothing for us but to go on with the business," said the stout man, eying Loporta uneasily from under his horrible eyebrows.

"Gentlemen," said Roget, facing them, his resolute face aglow, his eyes smouldering with suppressed fire, "my friend Loporta has been

unfortunate; but his is the misfortune of a too generous nature — "

"Generous!" sneered the man with the eyebrows, — "I don't call spendthrifts generous!"

"Roget," pleaded the music-master, lifting himself firmly, "let the business go on; he will only insult you, and — "

"Insult!" cried Roget, hotly; "did you ever know a person like him insult a man who could buy his miserable carcass twenty times over? No, no; my friend, you are mistaken: it is the poor only he insults, — the poor and the defenceless. I 'll warrant he has turned more than one poor widow out of doors."

"Quite right," replied the stout man, with the greatest composure; "I 'd turn anybody out who did n't pay me my rent. Whoever wants to spunge must go to somebody else besides John Ricker. But come, — we are n't here to talk, but to act."

"It seems you have this business solely in your hands," said Roget, contemptuously.

"To be sure I have; if I had n't, it would never be cleared up, and *he* might go on till kingdom come, swindling folks out of their honest debts."

Roget's hand came down with such force upon the desk that the man sprang to his feet with an oath, moving back, however, as he

encountered the terrible glare of an eye such as he did not often meet. It was while Roget stood in this position, his face ghastly pale with rage, his posture like that of one ready to spring upon his enemy with something more deadly than words, that the door slowly opened, and Madam Porta, white and breathless, nearly fainting with the exertion of her walk, entered slowly, the miniature in her hand. Loporta had let his head fall in his clasped hands, the two lawyers were intent upon Roget's contemplated violence, the heavy-browed broker stood off, half cowering, like a man who dreads a blow. The woman's eye took in all this scene at one glance as she stepped tremblingly forward.

"O my husband!" she cried, her tenderness reviving at sight of his dejection; and throwing the miniature carelessly on the desk, she staggered to his knees, and fell upon them, winding one arm about his neck. "What trouble has happened, dear Loporta? What is it, Roget?" and she lifted her head,—her appealing eyes,—"what is the matter with my husband?" But Roget had taken a new posture. With both hands leaning heavily upon the desk, he devoured the picture, his eyes glowing. He heeded nothing around him, not even Madam Porta's anguished questioning.

"Where, in Heaven's name!" he exclaimed in

slow, concentrated tones, "did you get this picture of my wife?" Loporta sprang to his feet, and, still supporting his burden, went feebly towards the desk. He was frightfully excited when his eye fell upon the miniature; he strove to speak, but he could only make gestures of the wildest supplication. At last his tremulous lips gave utterance to the words, — "Roget, was that woman your wife, — before God?"

"Before God and man she was, as I can prove," said Roget hurriedly, eye and ear intent.

"My poor, innocent, wronged Lucille!" cried Loporta, ineffable tenderness in his voice. "Pure, then! God be praised, *my sister was pure!* Marie," he continued, unheeding by whom he was surrounded, "here is my miserable secret, — here is what has eaten into my heart like a canker-worm for sixteen long years. I could not tell you what I thought she was, — I would have guarded her very dust from the whisper of shame, — poor young creature! I swore that I would keep my sister's memory unstained from public rumor, and I have done so at almost a fearful price. Now welcome poverty, disgrace. Now, Marie, you know all; now you forgive me!" She was leaning upon his bosom, hiding her tears.

"But you, Roget," he said, almost fiercely, "you I shall hold to a strict account. I found

her deserted, in poverty, dead in the arms of a stranger. Not unless you can honorably acquit yourself of seeming baseness shall I give your child to you." Roget started; a flush of the wildest joy illumined his features, succeeded by a look of contrition, of manly sorrow. He lifted the pen nearest him, plunged it in the inkstand, wrote rapidly on a slip of paper, and handed it to the broker, who, when he had read it, bowed, almost courteously, and withdrew with his two satellites. Minot came out from the shadow where he had been standing, shaking imaginary cudgels at the coarse intruders, to give his congratulations. Marmot stood still within his shadow, glimmering in white, and rubbing his old hands ecstatically. And thus Roget standing still, repentance visible in every word and movement, told his story, — abating nothing, extenuating not one jot or tittle of his conduct, — unprepared at the close for Loporta's tearful grasp of the hand, his low and heart-felt, "Brother!" twice repeated.

"And now," cried the master, standing erect, — the old sadness, the deforming stoop, gone forever, — "send for Lucille, — send for Madeline. Don't tell the child too suddenly, — we will sing the *Jubilate Deo* first. Come here, Marmot, — I 'll have out the trumpet and the cornet, — we 'll make a joyful noise truly! If

my creditors hear it, may it do them good!" and up he clambered, threw open the doors of the instrument, rapidly drew forth stop after stop, till Minot cried out, "Do you mean to crush us, Loporta?" At that instant Madeline and Lucille entered together; Madam Porta beckoned, and they stood beside her. "We have heard a very great piece of good news," whispered her aunt, in answer to Madeline's questioning glance. "Come nearer, my children"; she placed an arm caressingly around both. Lucille, in her astonishment, turned her innocent face towards her, and when Madam Porta whispered, "I love you now, my dear," she was so overwhelmed that the tears came rushing to her eyes, and she trembled like a leaf. Roget drew back, — his soul in his face as he watched the group, holding his folded arms clenched against his breast, — striving to still the violence of his emotions. And when the grand strain burst forth, impetuous, triumphant, for the first time in his life he felt the force and beauty, the thankfulness, embodied in those glorious words: —

> "O, be joyful in God, all ye lands!
> Serve the Lord with gladness,
> And come before his presence with a song.
> Be ye sure that the Lord he is God!
> It is He that hath made us,
> And not we ourselves.
> We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

They had sung thus far, when another voice — a voice of wonderful power, finished, pure, exultant — broke in, bearing up the burden of the song as an eagle bears her young upon its wings, heavenward. Loporta's hand trembled as he moved it from chord to chord; large tears rolled down his cheeks and ran into the silver of his beard. The lost voice of his wife had come back, fresher, richer than ever, — sudden as the advent of an angel might be, — every tone deepened by the fervor of religious faith.

> "O, go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,
> And into his courts with praise;
> Be thankful unto him,
> And speak good of his name.
> For the Lord is gracious, —
> His mercy is everlasting, —
> And his truth endureth
> From generation to generation."

"O, I am indeed thankful!" cried Loporta, as the holy strain came to a close; "I am indeed thankful! Welcome poverty now, I can bear it!"

"But you shall not," said Roget; "think of what I owe you, my brother, — you who amid opposition, and even slander of the basest sort, have so nobly protected my motherless child. This house is yours, with everything it contains. You are free from debt. Your creditors, by this time, are satisfied; you are a free man. Now,

in exchange, give me my child." He dropped impulsively on one knee, and held forth his arms as Loporta, kissing the forehead of his niece, led her towards Roget.

"My darling, you are my own daughter," he murmured, "and I am your father."

On raptures, exclamations, and new-born, sweet hopes we will let the curtain fall.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A LAST CHAPTER.

I WISH there was no necessity for a last chapter. Everybody must see how it all ended, and say, perhaps, with Mother May, "Well, I 'm right glad the child has found her father." "And," adds Father May, puffing at his short, black pipe, "I 'm right glad she 's found a rich one too." How much of selfishness may have been mixed with his gladness I cannot tell. Father May was as human as any of us, and probably had his castles all built, and standing as securely as it is possible for castles to stand in the air. He was not in the least surprised, though his dame was, at receiving a handsome life-annuity from Roget, that enabled him to "knock off" work, and "lay on his oars," in the language of an old rigger. As for the piano-forte, that was to be a fixture. Lucille would often visit her old foster parents, and delight them with her exquisite voice. "Dear heart!" said Mother May, as she surveyed the instrument, "she 'll never have to be a public singer now, — and I guess when

she knows her mother's story, if she don't know it already, she 'll never want to be one."

Well, Madam Porta was down in her bright sitting-room once more, happier than she had ever been in her life, her heart swelling with love and contrition. Every little service she performed for Loporta was a mute appeal for forgiveness; she could hardly forgive herself for the thoughts she had cherished. Roget was a lion; Madeline had heard his story, and, would you believe it? (though she tried not,) loved him more than ever. Indiana was installed in her old place, and, under the tuition of her mistress, had learned to be gentle towards her most intimate friends.

It was early spring. Under the window, the crocus showed its timid petals; the birds twittered in the branches of the city-elm. Lucille had been domiciled in her father's splendid home for nearly two months. She took kindly to her new fortune, — did not scruple to spend the money her father lavished upon her, I dare not say, sometimes, how foolishly. Mother May looked aghast at a crimson velvet rocking-chair that found its way somehow to her humble door one day, and which stared her in the face till she took it in. Gold-bowed spectacles, silver spoons, jaunty little trays, pipes of every device; nice gilt packages of tobacco, that never hinted at

the wickedness within; jars of sweetmeats, — all came pouring in with a profusion that mystified the good old couple, unused to luxuries, and whose simple wants had been satisfied so easily. But there was no withstanding Lucille's coaxing ways, — they were forced to accept her lavish gifts.

"I 'm as happy as ever I can be; but I want *you* there." This Lucille said in the most natural way in the world, throwing herself on the ottoman cushion at Madeline's feet.

Madeline blushed; Madam Porta, some little ways off, laughed to herself.

"And what is better, father says he is going to try and prevail upon you to come. Oh!" and she held her handkerchief up to her lips, "if he knew I told you, what would he do to me?"

"I am there often enough, I should think," said Madeline, under her breath.

"O, but that is n't *the thing*."

Madam Porta made a sign to her, cried, "Excuse us," to Madeline, and carried Lucille out of the room with her. It was an innocent little ruse, for when Madeline lifted her eyes, there stood opposite her Roget.

"Madeline," he said, softly, and then his color went and came, his eyes alternately flashed and saddened. He sat down near her.

"Madeline, do you remember that I once told you a story up in the music-den of getting lost in the woods, of missing my guide, of that perilous night?"

"I remember it."

"After I was through, this was what you said to me: 'Ah! you have lost your guide; and, like the guide of the mountains, he is all the time not very far off.'"

"I remember," said Madeline, faintly.

"Madeline, I have found my Guide."

"I give you joy!" she said, lifting her frank glance to his.

"Is there nothing else you can give me?" The young girl looked down again, startled.

"After all you have known of me, — my wildness, wilfulness, neglect, and sorrow, — do you dare to trust me with yourself? I want you." She was silent.

"If you decide against this disposal of your heart and hand, I shall take Lucille and go back to Italy. Say, dearest," he added a moment after, "shall I go to Italy?"

Madeline shook her head.

"O, but I shall; *I* have decided."

She looked up startled.

"To go and take you with me. Minot, the foolish boy! — of course he is foolish, is he not, Madeline? — has dared to love my only little

daughter. I tell him he must serve a good two years' apprenticeship for her, and in the mean time establish his character. He is silly enough to think he shall some time be a great composer: well, perhaps he may. At all events he is to pursue his studies in Italy, and I am going to keep up a fatherly supervision."

He talked in a grave, manly way, holding the hand he had taken; — not a very wonderful love-scene, reader, but a sensible one. I could have corded my hero's temples with great swelling veins, have set his heart to beating at I dare not say what terrible rate, — made him tragic or passion-mad; but Roget, if he had been refused would scarcely have altered, outwardly, from the calm repose of his every day-deportment. What terrible battles might have been going on inside I can't say, — but I know he was the man to hide them. Madeline was married not many months afterward. In their wedding tour they took the bright old town of Felixtown. Harry Lodi's mother met them, nor was she taken by surprise, for Madeline, like a brave, honest girl, had long ago opened her heart to her. The widow as she parted with Madeline, after their brief visit, whispered, "I don't blame you at all, dear; and if Harry sees you, I know he feels that you have done right."

Madeline is still in Italy with her husband.

Both Lucille and Minot, the former writes, are progressing famously with their studies, — and Minot bids fair to become an honor to his profession. As for Loporta and his wife, they still dwell together in perfect harmony. Marmot sits in the den, with his sheet wrapped round him, vegetating in a very unghostlike manner, and Loporta often ascends to the seat of the great organ, where, with many a thought of the loved, the lost, and the absent, his wife and himself join in singing the *Jubilate Deo*. And with them we say, — Let God be praised!

THE END.

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